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Religious Life of Adolescent

EDITED BY ROBERT HEYER

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The Religious life of the
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**THE RELIGIOUS LIFE
OF THE ADOLESCENT**

Edited by
ROBERT H. ROSS

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THE RELIGIOUS LIFE OF THE ADOLESCENT

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RECOVER READING ROOM
THE READING LIFE
OF THE APOSTOLICAL

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John and Catherine Nelson

WE CAN'T TURN BACK THE CLOCK



Rick Smolan

James J. DiGiacomo

An adolescent comes into the teen years with a suitcase filled with odds and ends—a few ideals, some values, assorted hangups, various aspirations, a variety of prejudices. They add up to a view of himself and the world. All sorts of people have helped fill the suitcase—parents, relatives, siblings, schoolmates, teachers,

James Di Giacomo, S.J., is a popular author and lecturer on religion and youth.

and the omnipresent boob tube. Adolescence is a time to go through the suitcase, to see what to keep, what to discard—and maybe to look for a few items that aren't there.

One of the articles under inspection is religious identity. The growing young person is taking a long, hard look at this garment. Is it still in style? Does it wear well? Is it comfortable, or

does it pinch, scratch, or irritate? Do I really need it? Is there room for it in a suitcase that is getting more crammed every year? Mom and Pop would feel badly if I dropped it, but is that a good enough reason to keep it?

Growing up has always involved this kind of reassessment of a childhood past. Religion has never been exempt from this process, as teenagers have always been faced with the choice of either building on their religious patrimony or eventually rejecting it. Within the last decade in the Catholic community, this process has become observably more painful and dramatic. The Sunday morning debate on Mass attendance (whydowe-gottago?) is only the top of the iceberg, though it is highly visible and often mistaken for the iceberg itself. Many blame the crisis on the changes in the Church. This complaint usually comes from those who wish Vatican II had never happened, and so those who are in sympathy with the thrust of the Council—especially progressive religious educators—tend to reject the charge. It is now time to admit the truth in the accusation, not necessarily with a sense of guilt, but in order to assess the Council's impact on religious growth and development. If adults fail to gauge accurately and face honestly the effects of rapid and sweeping change on religious acculturation and socialization, youth in increasing numbers will be lost to the Church.

Vatican II was only part of a process that let loose many forces in the

Church. These forces produced a new vision of the Church, and, inevitably, a new style of religious activity and discourse. Values like institutional strength, monolithic unity and unchallenged authority lost ground to personal experience, respect for pluralism, and a sensitivity to the demands of individual conscience. No longer could identification with an all-embracing institution substitute for personal conviction and free choice. Such a change in consciousness was bound to have far-reaching effects on Catholic life. These were first felt in the religion classroom among the young, and then among adults, as the Sunday morning exodus began to affect higher age groups. While recognizing that the crisis is no longer an exclusively or even predominantly youthful phenomenon, let us examine some of the implications for religious instruction and formation of the young.

Benedict Ashley has suggested, with tongue in cheek, that we need a new Baltimore Catechism. The Church in 1960 had a certain vision of itself; the Baltimore Catechism was an instrument well adapted to pass on that vision. Since the Council, we have a new vision of the Church, but no catechism to match. There has been a proliferation of new catechetical materials so diverse in their philosophy and approach as to defy blanket evaluation. Most religious educators have stopped looking for the "right" book or series as the conviction grows that any book is no better than the teacher who uses it. Religion department heads and coordinators are looking

for teachers rather than books—people who can relate to the young, communicate with them, and offer a faithful presentation of the Christian message. But whether you're looking for a teacher or a book, it helps to know what makes a good one. What are the qualities that make for effective religious communication?

Within the bounds of this article we shall limit ourselves to just one. We select it because its desirability and necessity are relatively recent developments, brought on by a highly significant but barely acknowledged shift in our religious culture. This shift is a tendency in religious experience, reflection, and discourse, to start not with God but with man. Gregory Baum calls it the Blondelian shift, after the French philosopher-theologian Maurice Blondel. Richard McBrien calls it a Copernican revolution. At a time when so many institutions and laws are being challenged and attacked for not serving human needs, it is not surprising that the whole ecclesiastical machinery of structures, laws, and even dogmas should pass under the same searching scrutiny. Men perceive this development in different ways, of course, according to each one's bias, ideology, or value system. To some it means rebellion and anarchy, to others it bespeaks a raising of consciousness, a potential gain for freedom and dignity. At any rate, regardless of the value judgments placed on it, this altered point of view must be acknowledged as a fact and dealt with accordingly. Those engaged in religious formation will ignore it at their peril.

This shift in perception shows itself among the young in very stark and visible ways. Here are a few examples.

Remember the high school retreats in the 1950's? A popular feature of those early "live-ins" was the Question Box, where youngsters could ask embarrassing questions without courting peer ridicule. One of the most frequently asked questions was: "How far can we go on a date without committing a mortal sin?" When was the last time anybody asked *that* one? Now the question is: "Why do two people in love need a piece of paper (the marriage license) in order to have sex? What's wrong with it if no one gets hurt?"

There was a whole arsenal of popular conundra that grizzled religion teachers and retreat masters recall with nostalgia, like Buck Rogers episodes and lines from *The Shadow*: "How much meat can you eat on Friday before you commit a mortal sin?" "Is it a venial sin to work less than two hours on Sunday?" "How late can you get to Mass and still fulfill your Sunday obligation?" We dust off these quaint period pieces not to poke fun or to put down the people who worried about such things. The old neighborhood wasn't so bad, but you can't go back there, because it has disappeared. The question is—*why* did it disappear? And it won't do simply to say that legalism was discredited or that attitudes toward sex became permissive or liberal or healthy (depending on your bias). That's really no answer. It just

pushes the question back one more step: *Why* did pseudo-sciences like peccametry (the measuring of sins and their gravity) become as extinct as pterodactyls in one breathless decade? And don't say that it was due to developments in theology. Folk religions eat theologies for breakfast. No, the causes go much deeper. And, without denying the complexity of the phenomenon, we may legitimately single out one of them—this tendency to express religious concerns, interpret religious experience, and ask religious questions less in terms of God's demands and more in terms of the needs of the individual.

This tendency shows up in some observable ways. One is the frequently heard complaint about Mass by teenagers: "I don't get anything out of it." Even after we allow for the inevitable self-deception and self-serving that often underlie such a statement, we must grant it a certain legitimacy and take it seriously. It doesn't help much to counter that "what we put into the Mass is more important than what we get out of it." Adult readers may understand and appreciate such a statement, but it is incomprehensible to many, if not most, of the young. (Parenthetically, it should be added that many adults also seem to find this answer not incomprehensible but simply inadequate. How else can one account for the startling drop in Mass attendance among those in their thirties and forties?) For better or for worse, large numbers of Catholics, young and old, cannot take seriously the notion of a religious activity which gives objec-

tive glory to God but does no perceptible good for the human member of the relationship. Anyone who deals with adolescents and does any real listening to them has to be struck by the pervasiveness of this attitude among them. Many young people take religion quite seriously and have a genuine longing for union with God. Unlike many of their counterparts in the late 1960's, they have few illusions about human self-sufficiency, and they perceive the inability of secular humanism to substitute for religion. Their openness to mystery and their desire to pray are striking. But woe to the adult religious guide who interprets this as a return to normalcy!

True, young people are turning again to God and prayer and religion, but they are not turning back the clock. They are looking for a God who changes them, for prayers that they can say with integrity, for a liturgy that helps them cope with their own private world. Call it narcissism if you will. Sound the alarm against pantheism. Summon the multitude from preoccupation with men to a return to God. Tell them, in the words of the Roman Missal, to "despise the things of earth and long for those of heaven." It may make you feel better, and a few youngsters will listen, but most of them will turn you off and go away sad.

Does it really have to be that way? When our children ask for bread, must we offer them a product that seems to them as stale and hard as a rock?

There are other reasons why we could be reluctant to turn a deaf ear to adolescents who seem so unrealistic in the demands they make of religion. An adolescent is, by definition, someone who is trying to find himself. Their felt needs are for acceptance, belonging, a sense of worth, encouragement, trust, and honesty.

They are told every day that they are free, that they must be responsible, that they must choose, that integrity is a virtue and conscience is sacred. Innovative and sensitive educators strive more and more to build a learning environment geared to respond to individual needs, tastes and talents as well as to the demands of a consumption-oriented society. Is it any wonder that they should put value on institutions and structures in terms of their contribution to their own self-realization and personal fulfillment? Call it rampant individualism if you will; you may be right. Maybe schools and classrooms have become too student-centered (although that's pretty hard to believe). At any rate, there is a new cultural climate in the making, and it has produced significant fallout in the religious sphere. To paraphrase a well-known automobile commercial, they expect more from religion, but they don't get it. They want things from religion and the Church that previous generations of youngsters did not demand—relevance, community, inspiration. Above all, they want to be taken seriously. They are often intensely inward, and their feelings are more important to them than anything else. This makes demands on li-

turgical celebrants, youth leaders, and religion teachers—demands which many of these concerned adults are not equipped to meet.

An adult who is engaged in the religious formation of the young is supposed to mediate God's self-revelation. He should speak of God's ways with men, or his self-communication through Jesus within that believing and worshiping community we call Church. The proper content of evangelization and religious education is the mystery of Christ. This is very difficult to do with many young people whose restless questioning often revolves around other concerns. Religious searching, asking questions of ultimate concern, is more characteristic of adults than of children or adolescents. What is the purpose of life? Are we alone in the universe? Is existence ultimately tragedy or comedy? What is stronger—death or life? These are religious questions. When adults ask them with existential urgency, they are disposed to hear the message of Jesus Christ who came to respond to these concerns. Do young people ask these questions? Nearly all of them do, from time to time; however, such concerns are not at the center of their consciousness. This is why we say that religion is an adult enterprise and Christianity is an adult religion. This is why Jesus of Nazareth in his public life spoke to adults, not to children.

However, if Christianity is a religion for adults, this is not to say that it is closed to youth. Far from it. Young people need the words of eternal life,

but those words must be spoken in ways adapted to their age and development. We must begin sometimes not with God or with the Church or even with Jesus, but with the young person, with his or her hopes and fears and dreams. The Church must reach out to them, not as a force to constrict or limit them, but as a community which loves and cares for them, takes them seriously on their own terms, and accepts them as they are even while calling them to be more. It should challenge without condemning, invite rather than coerce, inspire without discouraging, attract rather than threaten. Can we honestly say that this is how we have approached them in the past? And can we imagine Jesus treating them in any other way?

Eventually, to be sure, there must be hard sayings. Christ calls to sacrifice; to self-denial, to acknowledgment of sinfulness and guilt, to a resurrection that follows only after the cross. But it takes time and growth and maturity to be able to hear and grasp words like these. For many in their teens, the Church must content itself with just being there—a place to go, a group that cares, a community more of friendship than of mature faith. It must be more interested in the young person than in itself. Love must be offered with no strings attached. Church people must respect the freedom of the young, their need to roam, even sometimes to wander from the reservation. Before the adolescent hears of rules, restrictions, and penalties for deviation, he needs the kind of experiences that convince

him, deep down, that here is something of value, something not lightly to be rejected, a pearl perhaps of great price.

Is this selling out? Is this "catering to the young"? Is it watering down the Gospel? To some it will so seem. But we can be faithful to Christ by heeding his injunction not to quench the smoking flax. Nor does it mean that we have to be bland or harmless or less than honest. The idealism of Jesus Christ, which was rejected by the legalistic religious establishment of his day, has a tremendously powerful attraction for the young. But even he once told his apostles, grown men, that he had many things to say to them, but that they could not bear them just then. He said this after years of intimate association with them. He knew that they had to grow.

Our young people have to grow, too. How can they be helped? By providing an environment of faith and love, of deep-down joy that is rooted in hope. Only a mature, "faith-full" Christian community can do this. Adults must show the way and let their growing children follow at their own pace. How many young Catholics see their local church community in this light? And when they don't, is it because they see only too well?

Institutional religion is on the wane. Expressions of faith that are merely cultural, skin-deep, without the power of profound conviction, no longer attract the young. They need a God who makes a difference, a reli-

gion that can affect the lives of its followers at their deepest point. Paradoxically, even while young people may not yet be ready to respond to such demands, they need to be with those who have done so. Conventional religiosity on the part of adults, far from impressing the young, repels them. Genuine faith,

unflinching honesty, and mature commitment by respected elders give them strength through a vision of what they can someday be.

Our young people are trying desperately to find themselves. The best help they can get is from adults who have found themselves in finding Christ, and who have the patience to let their children find him in their own way. So the next time you see them going through the suitcase, resist the temptation to do it for them. Don't just *do* something; stand there.



To Teach Christ Jesus

John S. Nelson

About ninety high school religion teachers in the diocese of Trenton spent March 7, 1974, working out how better to teach Christ Jesus. This article will treat one key issue raised and discussed, but not resolved, on that occasion:

How to sort out and understand the many different popular images of Jesus these last few years?

How to evaluate them as expressions of Christian faith?

How to present this new-found Jesus

to adolescents, especially to those with little or no interest in anything religious?

Jesus: Charismatic, Liberational, Relational

Suppose that we put to ourselves the question which Jesus asked of his followers at Caesarea Philippi: "What are people saying about me?" If we listen to current songs about Jesus, look at the art, and above all observe those men and women who fashion their way of life on faith in Jesus Christ, we find a wide variety of responses. Though each is different, at present three trends come through to

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Photo: Rick Smolan

me most clearly: the charismatic or pentecostal, the liberational or revolutionary, and the relational or interpersonal. They can be described as follows:

Jesus as charismatic: to experience him is to transcend oneself, to be lifted out of oneself. Through his Spirit, men and women become enthusiastic in the root meaning of that word: possessed by God. In varying degrees this is the Jesus of *Godspell*, of Dali's *Sacrament of the Last Supper*, and of some religious groups such as portrayed in the recent television series *Religious America*.

Jesus as liberational: to experience him is to be given reason and strength to challenge sinful structures of contemporary society. Through his Spirit, men and women become involved in the dangerous business of forging, even forming, a new social order. Such an image we find in counter-culture music and art, in the strong rhetoric of liberation theology, and in the prophetic writings and actions of a King, a Merton, a Chavez.

Jesus as relational: to experience him is to find God in the personal relationships which constitute much of the fabric of human life. Through his Spirit, men and women become more sensitive to and unselfish with one another. Witnessing to this view are the more tender ballads of *Jesus Christ Superstar*, the communal and horizontal dimensions of prayer in his name, and the extraordinary self-giving of Christians like Dorothy Day and Mother Teresa of Calcutta.

The Genesis of Fresh Images of Jesus

Before evaluating and applying to catechesis such images of Jesus, it may be helpful to determine why at this moment of our history these three aspects should come to center stage, rather than, for example, Jesus as personal Savior from sin or Jesus as intercessor with the Father. When we study how doctrine and devotion have changed and shifted in Christian history, a pattern emerges. It is always a risky business to take the data of experience and to affirm that they fall into a verifiable and predictable sequence. To explore and explain what is happening, however, I submit that usually there are three steps in the birth and development of a fresh or renewed understanding of Jesus: openness, experience, and fulfillment/conversion.

The first step is an openness, an unfinished-ness, a becoming. It can be an elemental emptiness, the *tohuvebohu* of the second verse of Genesis: "The earth was a formless wasteland, and darkness covered the abyss, while a mighty wind swept over the waters." It can be the holowness down deep in our psyche, the *Angst* of which Kierkegaard speaks in *Fear and Trembling*. It can be the metaphysical need to expand outward and upward, as expressed by Karl Rahner's phrase "supernatural existential." It can be political and sociological oppression, personal loneliness in the midst of a crowd, or the perduring restlessness of heart described by St. Augustine

in his *Confessions*. It is the coming to consciousness within us that, as persons, we are unfinished.

Here we have to note something very important. No one of us is unfinished "in general." Our openness is particularized, and that particularization is expressed in definite and circumscribed thought and word patterns: bread; government overthrow; next year Jerusalem; this lover; these bills to be paid; a man, a woman, a community searching for its identity and for its purpose in life. The words here are very important.

In this state we encounter Jesus Christ. This is the second basic step. It happens in many wonderful ways. "Christ plays in ten thousand places," writes Gerard Manley Hopkins. Peter and John got to know him in Capharnaum, Paul on the road to Damascus, early followers in the teaching of the apostles, in the prayers, and in the breaking of the bread. As time passed, the spectrum spread wider: in sacraments, in community, in suffering, in reading, in contemplation, in service, in loved ones—each Christian could come forward and add to the list from personal experience.

This second step also has an element which calls for emphasis. Somewhat as the being-unfinished of step one is not just "in general," but is particularized, so, analogously, encounter with Christ is not only with an ideology, with a wisdom, with a dream. It is with a person, a particular man, this Jew: Jesus of Nazareth. He is

rooted in history, not fabricated from our needs and imaginings.

The third step is in many ways the most critical of all. What happens to a man, a woman, or to a group of people in their experience of Christ? What happens to them, and what happens to the language in which they express themselves?

I believe that two inseparable but opposite things occur, which can be expressed in such polarities as fulfillment/conversion, continuation/change of direction, development/liberation, evolution/revolution, right on, brother!/sinner, repent!

A word about each term of these polarities, which at heart are all basically the same. Fulfillment: encounter with Christ fills in something of our emptiness. Were this not so, we would not recognize him. Were this not so, our God-given potential for growth toward personhood would be void, meaningless, an unfunny hoax. Were this not so, Christian faith would have no house to enlighten, no meat to preserve and flavor, no mass of dough to quicken.

Conversion: encounter with Christ teaches us that what we really need is not what we thought we wanted. When I read books on human development, such as those by Erikson or Maslow or Rogers, I get excited about being a person. When, however, I read again the Gospels or hear them proclaimed at the liturgy, it comes home to me that by the standards of the human sciences Jesus is

not dead center. Sacrificial love, or *agape*, which is at the heart of Jesus' teaching and example, is, humanly speaking, eccentric. What Paul wrote to the Corinthians still makes sense: "Yes, Jews demand 'signs' and Greeks look for 'wisdom,' but we preach Christ crucified—a stumbling block to Jews, and an absurdity to Gentiles; but to those who are called, Jews and Greeks alike, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God" (2 Cor. 1:22-24).

In this fulfillment/conversion, what happens to our thought patterns and to the vocabulary with which we express them? The words remain, but their meanings change. For example, the Church has called Jesus "the Christ" at least since shortly after his resurrection. To understand this title, we must somehow get inside the skins of first-century Jews, both in Palestine and in the Diaspora, and share their messianic hopes. But this is not enough. Jesus as the Christ is both the Messiah they longed for and its direct opposite. The Church kept the name, Christ, to express both continuity and discontinuity.

If we apply these steps to experience of Jesus as charismatic, as liberational, and as relational, we can say:

—our openness as present is to go beyond ourselves, to challenge oppressive structures, and to relate more unselfishly to one another;

—in Jesus we find a model and a strength to move in one or more of these directions;

—in the process our notions of transcendence, of liberation, and of interpersonal relationship become transformed as well as fulfilled.

Testing for Resonance

There is a saying of Jesus found in all three Synoptic Gospels: "Take care not to be misled. Many will come in my name saying: 'I am he' and 'The time is at hand.' Do not follow them" (Lk. 21:8). To put this admonition into practice, what criteria do we follow when fresh presentations of Jesus appear? I suggest three norms.

The first norm is this: our understanding of Jesus should emerge from life and should respond to life. To use a theological word, it should be *salvational*. The experience of Jesus should make life markedly different than it otherwise would have been. A Christology should tell us about the growth and change that is taking place in those who profess the belief that Jesus is Lord.

The three popular images discussed above fare rather well by this first norm. We need to transcend ourselves, we need to involve ourselves, and we need to love one another.

The second norm is this: our understanding of Jesus should lead us into our future. Jesus proclaimed a kingdom of the Father which is breaking in upon us. Here the theological phrase is "proleptic eschatology." It says that the "already" is great, but it is nothing compared to the "not

yet" toward which we are making our way.

Current views of Jesus do not always measure up to this norm. Let me express reservations on them, knowing full well that the risks involved can be overcome.

My fear about the charismatic experience of Jesus is that it would like to institutionalize the transfiguration event. Peter said: "Lord, how good that we are here! With your permission I will erect three booths here, one for you, one for Moses, and one for Elijah" (Mt. 17:4). When they came down from the mountain, Jesus told them about the suffering which the Son of Man would have to undergo. The mountain of transfiguration is part of our future as well as our present, but as *event*: a gift that comes which can make life enormously different for us. But it is not a way of life which we can program and institutionalize. The immediate future is rather "down from the mountain," where Jesus and his followers share more in the lot of the prophets than they do in that of the mystics.

Those who preach the liberational Jesus are clearly within this prophetic tradition. Also, they are oriented very much toward the future.

My problem with them has to do with the tension between fulfillment and conversion. In the televised presentation of Brian Moore's *Catholics*, a monk at the traditional monastery asks the progressive priest

visitor from Rome about his involvement in Latin American politics. The young priest says that this is where the Church should now be at: political revolution. The monk replies that if he thought that way, he should have entered not the monastery but the Irish Republican Army. Who is right? Both are, so long as they do not exclude one another. I miss this tension in the language of liberation theology, and I'd rather not have to go through the revolution first before we make of it something more than politics.

The relational mode of understanding Jesus also moves us very strongly into the future. When we combine it with the Teilhardian view of the Christian community as a phylum of love on the axis toward the omega point, it takes our breath away. My reservations again have to do with a tendency to dissolve tensions when tensions should be maintained. The first tension is between mutual love and sacrificial love. We need both. A relational Christology inclines toward mutual love, that is, we find Jesus in people whom we like and who like us. But Jesus himself tells us that even the pagans do that (Mt. 5:47)

A second tension is between community and mission. In a relational Christology, we can too easily settle for a closed brotherhood. The paradox is that Christianity is an open brotherhood, or, in the title of a fine book by Joseph Ratzinger, *The Open Circle*.

The third norm is this: a new presen-

tation of Christ should be in continuity with the Scriptures and with the faith of the Church over the centuries.

On the surface this norm is so obvious that it needs no justification, yet when we delve more deeply it becomes so nuanced and complex that any treatment calls for a more patient and probing analysis than we can do in this article. Let me simply indicate its application to the three images of Jesus under discussion.

The charismatic Jesus is amply evidenced in the New Testament and in the history of the Church. Why then does it seem so new and why then are Christians who experience Christ in this way so often put on the defensive? In the film *Why Man Creates* one snail observes to another that ideas which change institutions tend in turn to become institutions which resist ideas which threaten institutions. The tension between movement and institution belongs to life, and religion is no exception. Charismatic experience should be welcomed, but with discernment.

When we turn to the New Testament, problems arise for the liberational view of Jesus. If Jesus was a political revolutionary, then his followers drastically misrepresented him in the Gospels. This does not mean that we cannot extend to sinful economic and political structures the opposition of Jesus to oppressive religious customs and practices. Such a development can be legitimate, but it is a development. Its justification lies in the view

that we are only now, after two thousand years, coming to understand the implications of Jesus' teaching and example for wider social structures.

Finally, how scriptural and traditional is the relational or interpersonal image of Jesus? It is very strong on both counts. The preposition *for*—for the Father and for us men—is a good summation of Jesus Christ as portrayed in the Gospels, in the Epistles, in the creeds, and in the doctrines of the Blessed Trinity, redemption, and saving grace. The problem is that we hedge on the *for*—Jesus as relational is characterized not so much by mutual love (*eros*: for the other, provided the other loves in return) as he is by sacrificial love (*agape*: for the other, even when love is unrequited).

One question remains: How present is this new-found Jesus to adolescents, especially to those with little or no interest in anything religious?

Application to Catechesis

Happy the catechist working with a group of adolescents quite spontaneously interested in the person of Jesus Christ! Where this is the case, it is not too difficult to design learning experiences with them. Unfortunately, most teachers have to contend with boredom and apathy as their major obstacles. What does one do? I suggest the following as one model: data-gathering, experience, reflection, witness.

To take one example by way of illus-

tration, suppose that a group is spending a semester or a weekend on a topic such as aggression. The first step is discovery or data-gathering: How do men and women relate to the world-within (themselves), to the world-among (other persons), and to the world-around (the physical universe) in terms of their aggressive drives? A sampling of current *mores* emerges quite quickly from news media, songs, films, etc. In addition, for the teacher if not for the student, a substantial scientific literature has in recent years grown up on this topic. The purpose of this step is objective knowledge, both of practice and of theory.

Second, the group experiences something of aggression within themselves. The experience can be actual, structured, or simulated. We do not program the actual experience; we simply become aware of the competitiveness which dominates so many of our waking hours. More within the control of the teacher is what is structured (such as a trip in a crowded subway or bus) or simulated (such as the game *Starpower*). The objective here is as much affective as it is cognitive.

Reflection should follow upon experience. Through question and answer, discussion, interviews, role-playing, and written composition, the group explores what they have learned and experienced about themselves and other men and women. The objective is change and growth which will express itself in better human behavior.

Thus far we have had in outline a lesson which could occur just as well in a discipline or in circumstances which most would not call religious. What is the place for the teaching and example of Jesus? He presents a standpoint, a conviction, a dimension of depth. He confirms much of what we reason to on our own, but he also confronts our closed and partisan viewpoints. This is communicated mainly through witness.

The simplest form of witness is direct and explicit. The teacher is with this group as a believing Christian. His own view of aggression derives in part from his faith in Jesus. He expresses this to the others in word, in attitude, and in action.

More indirectly, consideration of aggression leads naturally enough to such men and women of our century as Mahatma Gandhi or Martin Luther King or Dorothy Day. They share in common one thing: their thinking has been deeply influenced by Jesus, especially by the Sermon on the Mount. In such a context, even a group that has been apathetic will listen and learn from a sober and accurate presentation by a teacher on what Jesus had to say about human relationships.

On a given topic, such as aggression, Jesus may come through to some as relational, to others as liberational, and even to still others as charismatic. The teacher had best leave such *outcomes* unprogrammed. His work is to facilitate, insofar as he is able, some *encounter* with the person of

Jesus Christ. Like John the Baptist,
the good teacher is the friend of the
bridegroom who arranges for the
wedding:

“It is the groom who has the bride.
The groom’s best man
waits there listening for him
and is overjoyed to hear his voice.
That is my joy, and it is complete.”
(Jn. 3:29)

DO THEY KNOW HOW GOOD THEY REALLY ARE?



Moral Formation of Adolescents

Richard Reichert

Because the topics embraced by the title are potentially so vast, it is necessary to immediately define the purpose of this article. We will attempt to do two things—give a working description of morality, drawing heavily from contemporary philosophy and Scripture study, and make some ap-

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Photo: Rick Smolan

plications for parents and teachers who are involved with adolescents and the formation of their consciences.

This first section may initially appear too theoretical, but if the concepts are once grasped—assuming that they are true—the task of conscience formation or moral education becomes much more one of using common sense than of employing some

sophisticated methodology.

To begin, then, let's attempt to describe what it means to be moral. This requires first of all some understanding of the nature of the human person. According to the Hebrew mentality which permeates most of Scripture and according to much of contemporary philosophy, man is best understood as an entity, a totality. You can't separate his self-awareness from his actions. If actions don't proceed from self-awareness, we don't call them moral actions. For example, a sleepwalker is not held accountable for his actions. A person whose self-awareness has been seriously distorted by mental illness isn't held accountable. In the first case, there is no consciousness, so there can't be a moral or human action. In the second instance, the person will act according to his self-awareness, but because that self-awareness has been distorted through no fault of his own, we don't regard his actions as having any real moral content. In this latter case, I am oversimplifying because judging the moral content of a mentally ill person's actions is much more complicated, but the main principle remains true. Moral or human actions always imply self-awareness.

The degree of moral content will depend on the kind of self-awareness we can expect of a person. For example, a two-year-old will normally begin to be more aware of his distinctness from others. This awareness prompts acts of distinctness, often taking unpleasant forms from the parents'

point of view. He discovers that wonderful word "no." When asked to come, he goes; when asked to eat, he will seal his lips so tight a crowbar couldn't open them. As frustrating as his new behavior is for parents, it is actually the child's ethical task at this point in his development. His self-awareness of being distinct demands that he do "distinct" things. His awareness and his acts form a whole, a unity. In that sense we can even describe his actions as holy.

In the case of the young adolescent whose self-awareness is usually undergoing a transition, we will observe many contradictory actions. One day he acts very maturely, the next he responds like a child. In fact, his self-awareness is often vacillating between one of maturity and one of childhood. In the same way, he will often try on for size various identities in an attempt to discover one that is authentically himself. He may be the scholar one day, the clown the next, the strong, silent type the next.

This isn't a happy state for the young person or for the adults who must work with him, but he is in fact acting as a whole person. His actions are following his self-awareness. Whole here is used relatively, just as it was in the case of the two-year-old. Each is as whole as we have a right to expect, given his present stage of human development. Using this principle that moral action is action that flows from a person's present state of self-awareness, several other principles follow. First, just as self-awareness initiates particular actions,

so particular actions intensify or increase self-awareness.

For example, the two-year-old becomes more aware of his distinctness by his acts of distinctness. In the case of the adolescent this principle becomes much more important. There is always the danger that he can become fixed in a false identity. He tries out a particular "style" regarding himself as a clown. He does clownish things, much to the delight and applause of his classmates. This encourages him to continue in those acts and each time he is reinforcing a particular self-concept which may not only be inaccurate but, as we will see shortly, could be even immoral.

So not only does a man *do* what he is according to his self-awareness. He becomes what he does. In either case we are still speaking of a single totality.

Another principle must now be reviewed. Given the gradual development of the human person and his self-awareness, the moral content of a person's acts will be relative. If a mature adult imitated the egocentric and disruptive actions of the two-year-old, we would consider these wrong. Yet they are morally correct actions for the child. In other words, we can't demand or expect of the growing child or adolescent the same kind of actions we have a right to expect of fully developed persons. What is morally good for the six-year-old might well be judged bad for the twelve-year-old.

If the morality of an act is judged by a person's self-awareness, immoral acts will always be acts that a person knows contradict his own self-awareness. In essence, an immoral act is being untrue to oneself. That's why animals can't commit immoral acts. They can't contradict themselves. Their self-awareness is in the form of instincts which they must follow. Much the same is true of the young child. With mature man, however, his freedom and consequent moral responsibility lie precisely in his capacity to contradict his own self-awareness. The result of such immoral acts is to begin to create in the person a false self-awareness. The person becomes a lie to himself and all others. It should be noted that Jesus referred to Satan as the prince of liars.

To this point, we have been talking about morality and immorality without reference to any norm other than self-awareness. Ultimately, the moral norm is within man himself, his very nature and his consciousness of *the* moral norm. This means that the more accurately a person understands what it means to be human, the more good and evil his actions will be.

It is in this context that we can best understand the significance of revelation and especially the revelation contained in the person of Jesus. In the Old Testament we see the gradual revelation by God of who man is and who he is called to be. This revelation is co-extensive with God's revelation of himself since man can't under-

stand himself without understanding God. In Jesus this revelation of man and God was perfected and united in his very person. Jesus is the perfect revelation of who man is. Jesus is the perfect revelation of who God is.

The Good News Jesus proclaimed can be understood quite literally to be the Good News about who man really is: a son of God and heir of the kingdom. In a real sense, then, the only moral teaching Jesus gave us was in the form of telling us who we are. If we understand this, if in faith we believe what he told us about ourselves and our relation to the Father, we know what we must do. To contradict in our actions this most authentic self-awareness is to act immorally. We know that we are sons of God; to act morally is to do filial acts. We know that we are brothers to all men; to act morally is to do brotherly acts.

The ten commandments of the Old Testament and the law of love in the New Testament flow from man's self-knowledge. Once the Hebrews discover themselves as in covenant with Yahweh, the commandments make sense. They flow from the Hebrews' self-awareness of being the people of God. Prior to that kind of self-awareness the commandments would have been just so many external laws with no more efficacy than any other sets of laws. In the same way, as man became convinced of what Jesus was saying about who man is and the kind of new covenant being offered by the Father, his own self-awareness became his law, a law

of love toward God and one's neighbor.

To break the law for the Hebrews in the Old Testament meant to act contrary to their own self-awareness as the people of God. Such acts had the result of destroying their identity. They ceased to be the people of God and in an analogous sense God ceased to be, since he was only known as the God of the Hebrews, as far as they were concerned. In this same sense, once man knows through Jesus who he is, to act contrary to that self-awareness is in a real sense to cease to be a man. It is to become inhuman, something other than human. To be *in sin* is literally to be inhuman and to do inhuman things. For man to be inhuman is in a real sense to cease to be. To be in sin is to be dead.

While the animal can't cease to be an animal, man has the freedom to cease to be man. That is the real significance of man's freedom. He can accept existence as man or reject it. It is in making that kind of choice in keeping with the kind of self-awareness he has acquired about what it means to be man that morality must be situated. If this is an accurate working description of the nature of morality, we can immediately begin to see some implications about the nature of moral training and conscience formation.

Moral training will essentially take the form of helping the person understand who he is. Moral training is helping a person form an accurate

concept of himself. We do this through two general kinds of acts, although the specific acts are infinite in variety. We help a person form his own self-awareness by the way we relate to him. This is especially important in the child's earliest years, but continues to be important throughout life. We help the person develop his self-awareness through direct teaching about the nature of man. This latter method takes on more importance as the person matures and is especially significant in terms of religious education. In a real sense all religious education is moral training insofar as it helps a person understand what revelation tells about who we really are.

Let's first examine what it means to help a person form an accurate self-awareness by the way we relate to him. Psychology has much to say about this method. We know, for example, that if you call a student "dumb" often enough, he will begin to act dumb. He learns to think of himself as dumb and acts accordingly. We also know that if we praise and encourage a student at each success, he grows more and more successful. He has begun to think of himself as a *good* student and will act accordingly.

This principle is true not just in specific areas like learning a skill but also in the person's overall behavior. A person who has learned to perceive himself as generous will act generously. When he does something selfish, *he* will know it. A formed conscience is simply the sum total of a person's

self-concept. When that person acts contrary to that concept, it (his conscience) will bother him. This works both ways. A person can learn to perceive of himself as a "loser," as lazy, as irresponsible, as selfish. Once he has formed that self-image he won't be bothered by being lazy, irresponsible, selfish. It's what he has learned to expect from himself. How did he learn that? To a large degree from his relationship with others. Somebody had to tell him he was lazy often enough that he began to believe it.

In terms of the adolescent's self-concept, two things must be stated. First, by the time he has reached adolescence much of his self-concept has been deeply formed. We started this moral formation at the moment of birth and we must accept the results of that training as a given. This may be a happy situation or a sad one, depending on the way he has learned to perceive himself. Second, since adolescence is a time of testing out and gradually forming an adult awareness of oneself, it can be a particularly fruitful time for either reinforcing or correcting the self-concept he formed as a child. Everything is up for grabs in a sense. The good boy can become a bad adult. The bad boy can become a holy adult. It depends on what happens during this period. We as parents and teachers have a responsibility to help him do the right things by the way we relate to him. Specifically, this means that we must constantly do all we can to affirm and reinforce the adolescent each time his actions reflect a correct self-awareness. Everything from cleaning

his room to volunteering to help out in a program for retarded children should be praised by us. It could be objected that many of his actions will be things he has a duty to do, such as helping out at home. *We* know that; *he* may not yet be convinced. In this same context, our capacity to trust the adolescent plays a critical part. If we truly believe that he is basically good, one of the best ways to help him believe it also is to trust him. This is difficult. It implies some real risks, but it is necessary. Areas for trust are innumerable in our mobile society where the adolescent spends so much time away from parents.

The rules we give before he leaves, the questions we ask when he returns, and the checking up we do “behind his back” will all reflect the degree to which we trust him and believe he is basically good.

It would be naive, however, to presume that adolescents won’t make mistakes or that parents don’t have the responsibility to set ground rules and do some checking. The manner of doing so is critical. Either it will reflect real concern and a desire to help the youth make right decisions or it will reflect a basic mistrust and disbelief in him.

It would be equally naive to presume that he will never make mistakes. Therefore, the manner in which we react to him in these situations is equally critical. Two things we should at all costs try to avoid: expressing anger because he has embarrassed us in the eyes of others (“What will

the neighbors think?”), and focusing all attention on how badly he has hurt us and let us down after we trusted him. In either case, what will come through to him is that you aren’t as interested in him as in how his acts affect you.

On the positive side, we can and should express our feelings of hurt and disappointment and even anger that he *betrayed himself*. (“You’re so much better than that; I hate to see you hurt yourself like that; you’re just not the kind of person to go around hurting others like that.”) Focusing on your concern for him and how contradicting his behavior was in the light of how you regard him does several things. First, you’ve judged the act, not the person. He is never told *he is bad*; his actions in this instance are bad. It’s easier to change your actions if you are allowed to continue to believe that you are basically good—because others continue to believe in you. Second, by showing your concern for him, any corrective actions you must take—such as setting a curfew or asking him to make amends to whomever he hurt—have a better chance of being viewed as aids to him rather than punishments. They will have the positive effect desired with less risk of evoking anger and resentment or feelings of being treated unjustly.

Besides the manner in which we consistently relate to a youth, we have said that direct teaching also has an important role in moral development. What we mean here is the task of attempting to communicate to the ado-

lescent what we have come to believe through revelation about the nature of man. We are sons of God. We are brothers to one another. In the eyes of God we are lovable and we are loved by him. We will live forever. These are profound truths and not easy to communicate in ways that can be understood and accepted by the adolescent. What we must understand is that this kind of education is moral education of the best, most effective kind. That's how Jesus worked. He told people who they really are and only after that did he demand that they live and act like sons of God and brothers to one another. If we read the epistles we find the same kind of approach. The first effort was always to impress upon the people their dignity, their value in the eyes of God, their destiny as heirs of the kingdom. Only in that context did Paul or Peter or John chide and correct or make demands for particular kinds of behavior.

The point is obvious. We can expect Christian behavior from the adolescent only to the degree that he has come to think of himself as a Christian. Our moral training doesn't consist in stating laws and listing "no-no's." It must consist in convincing them of their worth and dignity and destiny as men and Christians. To the degree that they come to understand themselves in that way, they will know what they must do. We won't have to tell them. Keep in mind the fact that the Gospel is good news, not bad news. Keep in mind, too, that this doesn't make "being a Christian" easier as some people

would complain. The early martyrs didn't go to death because of some Church law. They acted out of their inner conviction of who they were.

In conclusion we are saying that moral formation consists essentially in helping the adolescent form an accurate awareness of his own goodness, dignity and destiny. He will arrive at that awareness to the degree that we treat him in ways that reflect our conviction of his goodness and to the degree that we are successful in communicating to him what God has revealed to us about ourselves. Knowing this won't necessarily make our task any easier and it won't automatically guarantee success. But knowing we are on the right track gives us the confidence and courage to continue in our task.

A SURVEY OF TEENS

John E. Forliti



Bro. Lawrence K. Clem

It's no secret that religious educators have been under serious stress the last ten years. Changes in the Church, the fast pace of modern-day living, and the trends of the time have all contributed toward the religion teachers' quandary. A survey of teachers of religion in the Catholic

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high schools of the state of Minnesota in 1969 revealed that half had no intention of returning to the religion classroom the following year. The pressures coming from parents, priests, principals and students were more than ordinary mortals could bear. There had to be easier ways to make a living!

Thankfully, the pressures faced by re-

ligion teachers in the turbulent 1960's have subsided and so has the rapid turnover of teachers. Teenagers today are not as restless or revolutionary as were their older brothers and sisters a short half-decade ago, nor are their parents as fearful and suspicious of the religion programs. Religion teachers today are a much happier and less harassed lot.

It was in the midst of the turbulence of the late 1960's that the Youth Research Center completed an instrument reliable in surveying the religious beliefs, attitudes, and practices of high school youth. Developed under the careful and expert direction of Dr. Merton Strommen, the survey instrument became available at just the right time for us. A three-year study involving nearly four thousand Catholic youths of high school age, representing urban, suburban, and rural areas, including youths in public as well as Catholic schools, was launched. Funding of the study was shared by the Butler Foundation of St. Paul, the Archdiocesan Education Center, and the participating parishes and schools. As each phase of the study was completed, the data played a significant role in the shaping of youth ministry in the archdiocese, particularly as it helped teachers, clergy, parents, and youth themselves filter out fiction from fact.

The picture that emerged not only gave hope to those working with youth, but also provided much direction in the creation of programs based on real needs. It is important

to keep in mind that the samples of youth included in the survey were randomly selected and were representative of the majority of Catholic families in the archdiocese. The survey did not include the "nominal Catholic" who was baptized in the Church but hasn't appeared in it since.

Quite clearly, the data told us four facts.

First: *Contrary to popular feeling, Catholic youth are still church-goers and are genuinely interested in God and religion.*

Catholic youth have not given up or abandoned the Church. Even with strong social pressures bearing down on high school youth to quit Sunday Mass and drop institutional affiliation, the majority still attend regularly and continue to claim membership in the Church.

Only eleven percent of our youth said they rarely or never go to church. Twelve percent attend once or twice a month, seventy-two percent attend once a week and five percent several times a week. This came as a surprise to many adults who had the impression that most young people had stopped going to Church. The Greely-McReady studies of the general Catholic population in recent years showed a drop in church attendance among all age groups of Catholics. Having begun our study in 1971, we could not determine how dramatic the drop was from previous years. However, we could determine

what changes had taken place since 1971 from a follow-up study done in 1973. The changes were significant and, for the most part, for the better. Whereas in 1971 church attendance and religious practice were much lower among seniors than among freshmen, in 1973 there was a significant increase in religious activity among the older youth. This fact helped substantiate a turn for the better that religion teachers were beginning to sense was happening in the early 1970's.

Young people were feeling better about the Church, too. Forty-seven percent said they were quite happy with it in spite of a few complaints. Another twenty-three percent admitted to having more than a few complaints but still could point to some positive areas in which they were satisfied. Only twelve percent said they were not at all happy with the Church.

A complaint for many was the uninspiring experience of worship services in their church. Only nineteen percent felt they were inspired with any great amount of frequency. Nearly half could point to an occasional feeling of being inspired. Nearly one out of five claimed total boredom. How much of this lack of inspiration is due to the tenor of the times and the age of the teens, and how much is the fault of the liturgy and how it is (or is not) celebrated are questions that merit serious consideration. Responses of youth on this item, as with many other items in the survey, varied greatly from school to school

and parish to parish—a fact suggesting that religious experience is not the same all over, and that where it's positive, young people like it, and where it's negative, they reject it.

Second: Young people show a more positive feeling toward the Church and toward the adults in the Church than adults estimate.

Many parishes today have recognized the broader human and faith needs of the teenager that an adequate ministry ought to deal with. For many, "religious education" is no longer defined within the limits of "religious instruction." Besides information and knowledge, youths need the experience of community and the learning that comes through involvement in service-oriented activities.

Most young Catholics have high expectations from the Church. They want it to provide recreational and social activities where young people get acquainted, and opportunities of a more serious tone where they can explore—both with other youths as well as with adults—the purpose and problems of life. Though all too often parents, clergy, and other adults shy away from young people, believing the popular dictum that "youth are in a world of their own," seven out of ten young people want the opportunity to discuss their problems and feelings with a group of interested adults.

Surprisingly to many (and especially to the teachers of youth), young people's attitude toward adults in the Church is more positive than adults

think. Part of our survey program included a sample of adults who teach or work full-time on the high school level. Without exception, adults overestimated dramatically the hostility and disaffection of youth toward Church adults. Nearly six out of ten youths feel that adults in their church would welcome "people who are quite different—wealth, race, dress, and hair." Half feel definitely (and another twenty-nine percent were uncertain) that most of their friends would feel welcome at any service or meeting of their church. Sixty-four percent say that some adults in church recognize them and call them by name. Four out of ten feel that their church is interested in their age group and is trying to help families improve parent-child relationships.

Less positive perceptions about adults showed up in items dealing with the adults' grasp of the basic purpose of the Church, parochial concern about global problems (such as starvation, poverty, war), the relevance of Church doctrine in real life, and the effect of Christianity on the actual lives of adults. One out of three feels that most adults in his parish congregation would not be able to say what the purpose of the Church is, that most adults are not concerned about starvation, poverty, and war, that the Church has little to say about life as it really is, and that the Christian faith has little effect on the actual lives of most adults.

Third: Young people want more help from the Church in coping with the

moral breakdown of our society.

If drugs, drink, and attitudes toward sex are valid barometers of current moral standards, then Catholic young people are in a down-trend. Usage of both drugs and alcohol increased significantly between 1971 and 1973, especially among the younger set. Rejection of any absolute norm toward pre-marital sex increased significantly in this same period. In a positive direction, however, morality among youth has strengthened in that more believe today than did in 1971 that a sin against one's fellow man is a sin against God. Also, more believe that God helps them make their moral decisions.

Moral problems of most immediate concern "in the past few weeks" to high school youth were these: cheating or lying (26%), smoking pot (23%), unkind talk or gossip (22%), swearing (19%), necking or petting (19%), smoking (14%), pre-marital sex (14%), revenge (14%), getting back at adults (11%), use of LSD or similar drugs (11%), protests involving illegal actions (10%), shoplifting or stealing (9%), sexy movies or reading material (9%), using heroin or other hard drugs (7%), and vandalism (4%). Although the above list is not exhaustive, it does point out the principal problem areas for many youths.

On questions of social justice, many of our youth still appear to be intolerant. Fifteen percent would exclude blacks or other racial groups from church activities in some communi-

ties. Four out of ten feel that most people who live in poverty could do something about it if they really wanted to. They say that poor people would be better off if they took advantage of the opportunities available to them, rather than "spending so much time protesting."

Eight out of ten say they want help from the Church in learning how to deal with today's moral breakdown, desiring to find a solid basis for deciding what is right or wrong. They want to know how to face ethical problems such as cheating, lying, or shoplifting. They want help in learning how to cope with the pressures placed on them by their friends, school, parents, and Church.

Fourth: Young people need and want the experience of a caring community and they need to be reassured by both peers and adults of their ultimate worth before God.

Wrestling as they must with their own identity and the self-acceptance that this ultimately requires, young people naturally have a strong desire for opportunities which promote personal growth and assist in problem-solving.

Nine out of ten young people want their church to provide opportunities where youth can experience acceptance in a group of people who really care about each other. High on the interest list of most young people are personal and group relationships in which they can say what they really

think and can be honest about what bothers them. The vast majority of youth not only want others to take an interest in them, but want also to be able to show an interest and a loving concern for others.

At least one out of five youths has an exceptionally low self-esteem and sense of self-worth. Such young people tend to shy away from group activities. Consequently, if the Church is to minister to their needs, it will only do so in clergy-to-youth or youth-to-youth programs, that is, a ministry built on a relationship.

A large number of teenagers (34%) admit to having had thoughts about committing suicide. How alarmed one should be at this number is difficult to say. If suicidal thoughts are just part of the natural struggle for self-acceptance and affirmations of self-worth, this figure shouldn't be upsetting. If, however, it says that present-day society, families, and the Church have failed to get the message across to a third of our youth that they are of value, the situation is critical. In either case, young people need from the Church a clear proclamation of their ultimate value before God. And it would appear from their expression of interests that they hear that message best in the context of a loving, caring community.

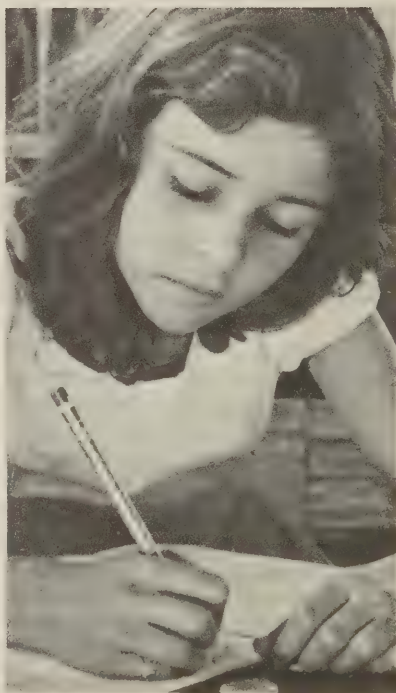
Catechesis Without Walls

Michael Warren

Is adolescent catechesis dead? Some would say so, and they would point to evidence to back up their position. They would point out that in many parishes all over the country CCD programs for teenagers are in bad shape. Not only do the kids not show up for these programs, but it is becoming more difficult to find adults to come forward as volunteers to help. Further, they would enumerate the creative persons who for one reason or other have moved out of adolescent catechesis, often into some other aspect of catechetical work. Finally, they might allude to the small amount of writing currently being done about adolescent catechesis.

In the light of these indicants, one might have to admit that something

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Jean Speiser

is dead or at least dying. However, it is not adolescent catechesis.

—What is gone is the possibility of catechizing the young without having at the same time a vital adult community.

—What is gone is the possibility of a predominately information-dispensing catechesis.

—What is gone is the possibility of tying the catechetical mission of the Church exclusively to the structures of schooling.

—What is gone is the possibility of dealing with the young solely through catechetical programs.

The purpose of this article is to reflect on each of these aspects of the changing situation of adolescent catechesis with special emphasis on what they imply for the future role of adults in fostering the religious development of adolescents.

1. Vital Adult Faith Community

All the major catechetical documents of the past five years insist that priority of concern goes to the adult. Without a quality of faith-life among adults, catechesis at other levels is not viable. It cannot be done successfully. Religion teachers in schools have known this for years. The school could not succeed unless there was a quality of faith visible among the faculty. But neither could it succeed unless there was also a quality of faith in the homes of the children.

In those days young people were sent to Catholic schools because many parents presumed that faith was vibrant among dedicated teachers.

With the schools dwindling in number, the task of adolescent catechesis is now falling directly into the hands of the entire community. Catechetical roles can no longer be handed over to a band of professionals in schools. The community has to look into itself and use its own resources. If the faith of adults is lived only out of formulas and obligations perfunctorily performed, then they will have nothing to say to the young. They will be rejected because their religious life was found lacking in quality.

I presume that there is a vital faith still present within our parish communities, in spite of the long-time neglect of adult catechesis. And yet, if a parish today wishes to set up a vital catechetical program for adolescents, the task must begin with the adults. Adolescent catechesis will cease to be in trouble when enough adults have been enabled to speak credibly of their own faith and when they have come to understand the meaning of the Gospel as it has touched their own life story.

2. Faith-Centered Catechesis

For many reasons, young people today are no longer satisfied with a catechesis centered on doctrinal information. They seem to want the kind of integrated approach called for by the pastoral message of the

American bishops, *To Teach as Jesus Did*. Doctrinal content must be lived in the life of a community, where the implications of doctrine are found in the quality of service rendered by that community. Even in the colleges and universities, the young are searching for more than information and skills. Information is at our fingertips through information retrieval and sorting systems. Skills can be picked up throughout life to serve the demands of different situations.

The young are searching for insight and value. The teachers who are most highly prized on college campuses are those who have gone beyond being merely well informed. The well-informed teacher is tolerated; the wise teacher is treasured. In the future, catechetical programs for the young must be centered around adults who are gifted with wisdom and reflectiveness and who have the capacity to interact comfortably with younger persons. In searching for such persons I would seek out those who are in touch with the story of their own faith development. They would be the ones who realize that the story is still unfolding. Their role would be to help young people get in touch with their own story, especially its Christic dimension.

In the past, the religious educator had to be a theologian. The mediator of the Christian message was the person who had abstracted that message into the categories of the argument, of the *logos*. Today, however, the situation has changed. In a period when we are bombarded with information

from the communications media, literally a maze of meanings, we need a process of coming to our own personal word, our own personal expression. Thus today we need a new kind of person to be the religious educator. We need a person who has experienced the Christian message as mystery and who is in touch with that personal experience at the level of narrative rather than in the categories of argument. Such a person is in a position to invite others to speak the story of their own faith journeys.

It is possible that we have underestimated the role of language in religious development. In emphasizing that language can express past experience, we have neglected the role of language in both evoking present experience and in understanding that experience. Psychology has shown us the possibilities of language in assisting persons to get in touch with the deepest dimensions of their own experience. At the heart of Paulo Freire's educational theory is a belief that articulation of experience is a first step toward human liberation. As one comes to articulate one's experience, one can also make sense of it and humanize it. Catechists of the future will be those who encourage others to discover their own language of faith. Faith deepens as one's experience of mystery in one's own life comes to word.

How is this done? How do adults foster this process of faith-coming-to-speech? They do so by the quality of their presence, by being-with. There is a kind of silence that evokes speech

n others. It is the eloquent silence of attentiveness. There is also a kind of speech that evokes attentive silence. It is speech that is so authentic an expression of one's life that it evokes deep personal reflection in others. Finally there is action, *praxis*, in which all take part. Action itself is a kind of speech, a way of speaking the truth in deeds. It also leads to reflectiveness and articulation at a deeper level.

Catechesis and the Structures of Schooling

In the past, our attempts at catechesis have been too tightly tied to the structures of schooling. Schooling functions within highly structured environments for the facilitation of learning. From within the educational community itself have come severe criticisms of a too-rigid school model of learning. Some schools have been radically changed to allow students and faculty to interact and learn in a variety of places and ways not bounded by classroom walls.

There is no reason why catechesis has to be tied tightly to the schooling model of education. The task of catechesis, especially among adolescents and adults, is to discover the ways that people can come together to grow in faith. Some Catholic high schools have successfully innovated along these lines. As a result, strongly academic classroom courses form but one aspect—though an important aspect—of the total educational program. There are also small group interactions aimed at exploring the

practical application of course content, service work outside the school, weekends of Christian living, and individualized study sequences. These innovations must now be more widely used, especially in parish CCD programs.

If catechists begin to focus on ways of being together with young people, rather than on a single classroom model, adolescent catechesis may make important progress in the future. Such an approach could allow us to tap the talents of a much wider pool of adult models than we have in the past. There are adults who have a great deal to offer teenagers but who cannot function as classroom teachers. What happens to the image young people have of adult faith when all their catechists are college graduates? Heaven help us if the kingdom belongs to the degree-holders! Many of us did our graduate work in wisdom, not in the universities but in the school of hard knocks.

There is something wrong with a program for young people that cannot find a direct catechetical role for those persons who would classify themselves as laborers, either in the home or outside of it.

4. The Place of Youth Ministry

If catechesis must be seen as a reality that goes beyond classrooms, so too catechesis itself must be put within the wider context of youth ministry. The concept of youth ministry can be a very valuable one for helping us understand the proper place of adoles-

cent catechesis in the pastoral work of the Church. This is the concept used by *To Teach as Jesus Did* to refer to youth work outside of formal school structures. (Actually, the term "youth ministry" accurately describes the total program of the best of the Catholic schools.) The term "youth ministry" suggests that catechesis is only a single dimension of the Church's ministry to the young. Some catechetical efforts with young people fail precisely because they do not fit into any wider coordinated attempt to serve their needs.

Something that good catechists themselves have recognized right from the time of Peter's Pentecost sermon is that you will make little progress in showing concern for a person's faith unless you do it in the context of concern for the person himself. Although developing the faith life of the young is an important and privileged work, it does not represent the only need young people have. The best catechists have never been willing to isolate the faith needs of young people from their other needs: the need for self-understanding, for counsel, for facing their developmental tasks, and their need to develop their physical skills. Often when people complain to religion teachers, "What does that have to do with religion?" what they are really complaining about is an effort to meet wider human needs, an effort the complainers do not understand.

What I am actually speaking of here is an integrated approach to youth. Some parishes offer young people

only religion classes, as if doctrinal input answers all their needs. This is simply not enough. There are other parishes that provide only athletic and recreational programs for young people, as if they were disenspirited bodies. Not only is that not enough for young people, but it is insulting to them. In this connection, a booklet on youth ministry recently published by the National CYO Federation should be highly recommended. Entitled *There Is a Place for You*, the booklet is worth close study by parishes.

In addition to the importance of a comprehensive ministry to youth, there is also needed a ministry of youth to others. To point to this need of the young is not a new idea. Unfortunately, however, the fine service/action programs of the recent past seem to have fallen into disuse. Various types of action groups, like YCS, Legion of Mary, and Sodalitys of Mary, have made an important contribution to the development of young people. Although the usefulness of these groups today may be debated by some, it is evident that similar programs are needed to help today's youth achieve an integration of understanding and life through service.

Young people will invent causes to devote themselves to. They are generous by nature and they desperately need to get outside themselves. Without such a service dimension in our programs, it is no wonder young people find them boring. I would recommend a serious look at a program de-

veloped by the Youth Research Center in Minneapolis over the past two years. It appears in a paperback by Ardyth Hebeisen entitled *Peer Program for Youth* (Augsburg Press, 1973). This ten-week program aims to help young people develop a peer ministry, that is, a mission to people their own age. Maybe we should all agree that a serious goal of youth catechesis is to develop a youth ministry among young people themselves.

Conclusion

The purpose of the Christian message is to be good news about what God is doing in our lives and in the entire context of the times in which these lives are rooted. When the Word initiates an encounter with the hidden Christ present in the depth of our lives, then it has truly become good news. This kind of encounter does not come out of doctrinal tomes or catechisms or even well-illustrated lectures. It comes through interaction with persons of conscious, ever-growing faith. Such an encounter is initiated by persons who are adult in their own faith. These are the people the young need to be with and to share with. The crisis of adolescent catechesis today stems from the fact that there are few such adults in our parishes. We have too many adults for whom as *catechist* the Christian message is about a pastness. Although they might have a vital personal faith life, they have not learned how to integrate their personal faith and their mission as catechists.

What these adults need are settings where they can be their own best selves, in touch with their own depth and with the depths that lie undiscovered in young people themselves. Catechesis is both more simple and more profound than we have allowed ourselves to realize. Those to whom any of this seems radical or strange should remind themselves that liturgy and preparation for liturgy were seen from the beginning as the peak moments of catechetical activity. In the early centuries, full mystagogic catechesis could be given only after the experience of baptism/confirmation and the Eucharist. It was out of that context that the catechized and their teachers entered together into a sharing, a communion in the mystery of the risen Jesus.

At this point, someone reading these reflections will ask, perhaps shrilly: "Be more specific. How am I to accomplish some of these goals? What exactly am I to do to lead adults to interact in a more human and more religious way with the young? Tell me specifically what I am to do." Such questions both miss the point and get at the real problem. No writer from outside your situation can give you the final blueprint for accomplishing the goals set out in this article. To wait for such a blueprint is to fix oneself in the same immobility that has been characteristic of youth catechesis over the past several years. The key is interaction. Parish catechetical leaders themselves must be adult models to other adults.

Where would one start? I would start with a program of prayer, reflection, and study for adults. Some young people could be included. If you assist one another in renewing your own faith lives, you will soon discover how you are to share this life with others. It took the disciples nine days of prayer and reflection before they discovered what it was all about. It might take you longer, but then you will be ready and you yourself will be a key part of the message that you will proclaim.

Individualized Learning in Religion



Rick Smolan

Ruth McDonell

It was a dreary day in March. Thirty boys and girls had been assigned to Room 304 for a sophomore religion class. A simple quotation written on the blackboard in the front of the room read: "Jesus has been raised from the dead." The students were

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listening with varying degrees of interest to a young teacher explaining the two traditional approaches to understanding Jesus and his resurrection—the incarnational and the eschatological. The presentation was well prepared and fairly interesting—to me. Following a fifteen minute lecture the students were directed to break into groups of five or six to

discuss the following questions which were distributed on mimeographed sheets.

1. What is the importance of the resurrection?
2. How are you aware of the presence of the risen Christ?
3. What does "Jesus is risen" mean, i.e., what follows from that fact? What does it mean to you day by day?

After about ten minutes or less than spirited discussion, the students were asked to share their insights with the total group. Finally, a bell rang. It had not been a bad class. The teacher was well prepared. The students were not disorderly; they did discuss. There were a few statements related to life. But "dull" was the most commonly used descriptive word I heard when I spoke to some of the members of the class later. Other descriptive adjectives were "boring," "a drag," and "not interesting." One young man made this insightful statement: "Religion classes are either watered-down Mickey Mouse discussion groups or theological lectures that I can never understand. I don't know why we have to keep on taking religion."

The experience I have just related is not an unusual one. It is a rather general state of affairs in many high school religion classes today, and it was this situation that created *PISCES—A Sourcebook for Personalized Instruction for Secondary Catholic Education in Schools*

Eight teachers of high school religion, keenly aware of the need for educational change in the teaching of religion as well as in every field of secondary education, sat down together in the summer of 1973 to ask themselves what the research of such contemporary educators as Holt, Stillman, Glasser and Goodlad had to say about the teaching of religion.

They studied the various theories of learning and began to sort out for themselves the educational myths and realities which they felt especially applicable to the communication of Christian tradition and values. They distinguished six upon which *PISCES* was based:

Myth 1—Students learn by listening.

Reality—Students may learn by listening, but they are more likely to learn by talking, doing and teaching.

Myth 2—A class of 20 students will learn identical content in a specific period of time.

Reality—Students learn different amounts of content at different times; they also vary in the amount they retain.

Myth 3—The purpose of religion class is to provide "theological" content.

Reality—The purpose of those minutes of the day called "religion" is to provide young people with the opportunity to probe in the light of the Gospel the meaning of life as it is

being experienced, either directly or vicariously.

Myth 4—The religion teacher should be held responsible for the student's appreciation and living of "religion."

Reality—The student must be responsible for his learning and living.

Myth 5—A good religion teacher must be an excellent actor or actress to hold the attention of the students.

Reality—A good religion teacher is one who aids his young fellow Christians to reflect on their experiences, to probe the misery of the human situation, and to discuss it so that they will begin to wonder, to ask questions, and to search for meaning in life.

Myth 6—There is a conflict between the "intellectual" and the "existential" approach to the teaching of religion.

Reality—This is false. The role of the religion teacher is not to program the students for Christian living, but to free them for life in the Spirit by awakening their own intelligence and freedom. Scripture, doctrine and liturgy are at the center of religious education, but the student must reflect on their meaning in relation to life if the content of our religion courses is to be significant today.

Using these realities as the basis for a philosophy of religious education, the need for learning activities translated into the religious issues that concern

each student became clear. These would allow the student himself to decide what he does during that period of the day called "religion."

In no way is this method of learning intended to be a trip back to the classes in which a religion teacher began the period by saying, "What shall we talk about today?" Rather, the activities from which the student will choose are carefully selected by the teacher to relate to the broad topic under consideration by the class. Thus, in a class in which the general topic is "death," a student could choose a number of ways to help him reflect on this topic. One might be by reading several chapters from Elizabeth Kubler Ross' *Death and Dying*. If such reading is a problem for the student, he could choose to view a filmstrip on the topic, visit a funeral home with the purpose of obtaining insights on our American attitude toward death, or even talk with a recently bereaved relative on the topic.

By now practical day-by-day religion teachers are asking such questions as "How can this be done with 25-30 students contained in a single classroom?" and "How can the students go to a funeral home during a class period?" The answer to these and similar questions is: "Right now they probably can't," but such options will become possible by making a few simple changes which will not upset the whole school.

Let us suppose that religion is being taught in three classrooms during the

same period. One of the classrooms could be transformed into a learning center where supplementary books, filmstrips, films, magazines, record players, etc., are kept for all classes. It is essential to the program that a teacher's aide be found to moderate the center. This person would be in charge of materials and the working (although not quiet) atmosphere of the room. Religion teachers will move in and out of this room as discussion or work requires. Having such a center frees the teacher to work with these small groups as well as those in the formal classroom where other kinds of work are being done. In the classroom the teacher is relieved of the obligation to be always in the center of the room. At times he will work with the entire class, but more often with individual students or small groups. Preparation for class is done in a long-term LAP rather than in day to day preparation.

A LAP (Learning Activity Package) is given to the student at the beginning of each unit of work. Some activities suggested there are for total class participation, some for group interaction, and others for individual study. Since much of the growth for adolescents in the area of religion and values comes through peer discussion, this element of group center action is a very important one.

Let's take a look at a LAP prepared for a sophomore class on "Jesus: The Man and the Myth." The first sheet of the packet given to each student

contains background reading on Jesus. It speaks of his manhood, his divinity, and his healing power. This is followed by a definition of myth: "A symbol which demonstrates the inner meaning of the universe and of life. Myth embodies the nearest approach to absolute truth that can be stated in words." In this sense Jesus is presented as myth.

To add interest the following sheet contains two Charlie Brown cartoons.

On the third page of the LAP the objectives, composition and means of evaluating the work are spelled out.

The objectives for this LAP are stated as:

1. To be able to use Scripture to demonstrate that Jesus was a man like us—an attractive man of power and action, a peaceful and loving man, a servant.
2. To be able to use Scripture to demonstrate that Jesus is the divine Son of God, the message of God's love for men.
3. To examine my own and others' personal experience of Jesus meaning in life.

The composition is:

The LAP is composed of several activities. The student will contract for

the activities he wishes, and his work will be evaluated on the successful completion of his contract. Some activities are for the individual, some for small groups, and some for the whole class. Some activities are included in all contracts; some are open to choice.

The process of evaluation is:

The evaluation of the student's performance on this LAP will depend on the successful completion of the activities for which he has contracted, on the teacher's estimation of the student's participation in group activities and discussion, and on a short quiz to be given to the class.

The fourth page entitled "Activities" has another cartoon.

It then lists Group Activities for all. The students must:

1. Participate in the following classes:

September 12—Presentation
September 19—Visuals
September 26—Group Prayer
October 3—Student Presentations

2. Participate in the following small-group activities: (a) Images of Christ; (b) Jesus the Man; (c) To Know Jesus; (d) Belief in Jesus.

3. Participate in group discussions on the activities and on their individual work.

4. Read all the notes included in the LAP.

5. Pass a quiz based on the activities of the LAP.

The student is also directed to choose from the following optional activities those which interest him. Since some of the activities will require more time than others in this LAP, no number is prescribed. The student knows the evaluation will be made on the quality, not the quantity of his work.

1. Form a catechetical team with two or three other students and work up a lesson in which you would teach Christ to: (a) your six-year-old brother; (b) an African child; (c) an Oriental child.

2. Choose one of the filmstrips on Christ in the learning center and make an original tape recording to accompany it. Use contemporary music and readings.

3. Produce a "take off" on the TV show "To Tell the Truth" (about Jesus). Choose three students to be the real Jesus. Ask questions. Each answers differently. The point of this is to present Jesus as Man and Myth.

4. Stage a modern trial version of the trial of Jesus.

5. Plan an "Oscar Award" film on the life of Christ. Decide whom you will cast in each of the roles.

6. Create an opinionaire on what

faith in Jesus is all about. Divide the class according to scored results. Each group will choose a spokesman to debate the issues.

7. Compare your image of Jesus with the image of Jesus in the record *Godspell* or with the songs of Judas or Mary Magdalene in *Jesus Christ Superstar*.

The final directions of the LAP are then given:

By yourself or with one or two others, prepare a presentation on one of the activities. Be prepared to present it to the class on October 3. The presentation should not be less than five minutes or longer than ten minutes. The following background reading is required of all:

1. *The humanity of Christ*: summarize the Scripture readings in 50 words—Matthew 1:1-17; 4:1-2; 13:54-56; 14:13-14; 26:36-44 or Mark 6:1-3; 8:1-3; 10:13-14; 26:36-44; 27:45-50 or Luke 2:1-7; 2:21-24; 4:1-2; 22:39-44; 23:44-47.

2. *The divinity of Christ*: summarize the readings in 50 words—Matthew 1:1-17; 2:13-17; 2:23-25; 9:27-31; 11:25-29 or Mark 1:9-11; 1:23-28; 2:1-12; 3:7-12; 9:2-8 or Luke 1:31-35; 3:21-22; 5:20-21; 9:18-22.

3. Use one of the four packets of materials on Jesus on the reference shelf in the learning center. From this reading, trace the development of your own understanding of Christ from: (a) the day of your first com-

munion; (b) your tenth birthday; (c) today.

The LAP given in synopsis here is based on a four-week period of religion classes meeting for forty-minute periods three days a week. Materials and activities would have to be adjusted for different time periods and period lengths.

In general there are six steps to preparing a LAP:

1. *Determine the general subject matter and general learning objectives*. Any idea can be the subject of a LAP as long as it is neither too wide nor too narrow. If too general or abstract, the LAP will be very long and learning will be difficult. In the beginning of change from formal classes to personalized learning, it is better to keep the LAPS designed to cover six or eight class periods. The objectives which can be expressed in words like "appreciate," "recognize," and "realize" should be put into concise sentences clear to both teacher and students. At any time during the class the student should be able to state clearly the objective of the activity in which he is engaged and its relation to the whole concept under study.

2. *Specify the content lesson theme*. The general subject matter is broken down into a manageable sequence of ideas that will help the student understand and reach the general objectives. Determining the sequence of ideas is often more important for learning skills than for learning ideas

or acquiring attitudes, though in each case choices are made as to which idea should come first, second, third, etc.

3. *Formulate specific learning objectives for the LAP.* These objectives can be *behavioral*, emphasizing specific observable behavior—write a list, compare, distinguish between, etc. Or these objectives can be *expressive*, emphasizing problems or situations to be dealt with without specifying the behavior which will result—participate in community building experience, rate yourself as a friend, become aware of the significance of symbol, etc. Whichever type of objective is chosen, it is important that objectives be carefully and clearly formulated, since they not only shape the learning process but also determine the kinds of materials that are used.

4. *Select essential learning activities.* These are the activities the teacher feels are necessary and sufficient to teach the idea or skill of the LAP. Whether essential or optional, the learning activities should mix media. Those other than the printed word provide activities for students with different, often non-verbal, abilities. More than one medium can be used effectively to reach a single objective. All materials should be easy for students to locate and use without a great deal of help or supervision. Directions for learning activities should be clear, concise, and as concrete as possible. In the optional activities it is a good idea to leave room for an activity to be suggested by creative

students and approved by the teacher.

5. *Select optional learning activities.* The fifth step in writing a LAP is to provide the student with options for moving beyond the limits of the LAP. These activities can be either student-initiated or teacher-suggested. They are not meant simply to repeat what is found in the LAP, although the teacher may sometimes choose to suggest additional learning activities designed to help understand the concept at hand. Usually, optional modes are open-ended, unpredictable activities which pursue ideas, questions, and problems raised in essential activities but moving beyond the specific goals of the learning unit.

6. *Determine the means of evaluation.* The evaluation of the student's performance on the LAP should be in terms of the stated objectives. The evaluation need not always be a written test. It might be made on the student's or the group's presentation to the entire class which shows a grasp of the objectives clearly beyond any written evaluation.

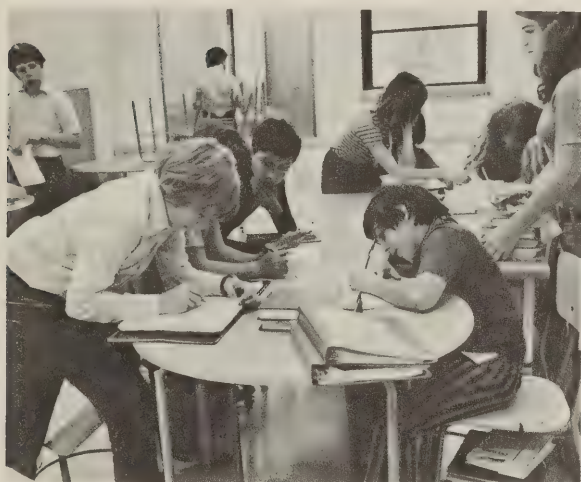
These are some of the steps a teacher can take to personalize the teaching of religion. They are not necessarily the steps to successful teaching. There is no clear road map for this.

A religion teacher must personalize the class for his own needs as well as for the students. If our aim is to prepare students for a world of change we must be ready to teach in new ways. Young people come to school

today, not only to master specific skills, but to "learn how to learn." Our efforts must be directed to helping them develop a basic self-reliance and a capacity to adapt to an emerging world. In the new world they will need a knowledge of science and a proficiency in communication arts, but more important to them will be the ability to confront the larger questions to which we cannot give answers. Our task is to help them develop the capacity to analyze, evaluate, and make decisions which are based on the value system of our Catholic tradition, but which are open to the emerging consciousness of man.

Planning Activities Into CCD

Irene and Joseph Roach



Elliot Brody

Shortly after we began planning experience-centered high school CCD programs a few years ago, we felt an urgent need for "a textbook that will give us all we need for sessions with the teenagers." Those teenagers we have worked with since then will be surprised to hear of our writing a book review; except for the Gospels,

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they've rarely seen a book in our programs, much less used one as a text. We haven't found one yet.

But, for an activity-plus-discussion approach in CCD, maybe that's as it should be. A comfortable, non-classroom atmosphere and a leisurely pace in small peer-group discussion do not fit well with time-consuming, "schoolish" book lessons.

Obviously, however, adult leaders of such programs need more than an informal setting. As idea sources in planning the content and/or techniques of experiential sequences, the books reviewed here are the richest we've found so far. That they represent a wide spectrum in tapping teenage religious potential should not be embarrassing in the afterglow of *Lumen Gentium*. The humanist self-affirmation of Sidney Simon's values clarification is no longer antithetical to the spiritual conversion aimed at by Lyman Coleman's books. (Still, Richard Reichert with his Roman theological orientation manages to be most used by us in our eclectic programming.)

Intended as a teacher's program manual, *The Real Thing* is one of the best in both substance and experienced-based approach. Each of the four units (personality development and adult Christianity for ninth graders, moral decision and personal relationships for tenth graders) presents a clear exposition of theological and/or behavioral concepts appropriate to the grade level and four activities to inspire individual reflection and small group discussion. For example, after a "lecture" on the Church as a community which cooperates in helping men become mature, freshmen are asked to cooperate in forming a new religion by priority ranking of thirteen elements of Catholicism (Trinity, sacraments, love, God-man, priests, etc.).

Reichert's goal—"to proclaim the Good News"—is imbedded in each

component, and the individual "lecture" and activity sections are self-contained, so both this book and his earlier *XPAND* (Notre Dame, Indiana, 1970), a similar program for ninth through eleventh graders, are very useful in designing programs for other age groups and other religious education purposes. The enthusiastic, reflective response of teenagers to several of the activities shows the book's greatest value—the structuring of authentic but unthreatening surrogates for significant life experiences.

Hundreds of real-life value decisions are the content of *Values Clarification*, a resource book which refuses by its own definition to ally itself with any value system, Christian or otherwise. However, the aim of the book, the uncovering of one's real values through 79 learning strategies, seems to be a crucial need in adolescent religious education. In addition, the examples supplied by the authors in applying these strategies are a treasury of nuanced experiential exercises which are suitable for small group discussion sessions.

The techniques described are easily adaptable to specific religious education purposes. For example, the "values continuum," in which participants are urged to express their opinion on controversial issues, has been used successfully with such questions as "How involved in politics should the Church be?" or "How often should Catholics go to Mass?" (For most effective use of the strategies, the basic background work,

Values and Teaching [Raths, Merrill, and Simon, Charles E. Merrill, Columbus, Ohio, 1966], is strongly recommended.)

Because the primary task of *Values Clarification* is to display techniques, no index of situations or strategies appropriate for a given topic is provided. Aside from becoming familiar with the book, an easy solution now available (for a price) is a values-clarification teacher's guide and "kit"; one example is *Search for Values* (Pflaum Standard, Dayton, Ohio, 1972), which is organized into seven units ("Time," "Authority," "Competition," etc.) of six exercises each.

The advantages of non-judgmental value-clarification exercises for teenage programs—encouragement of personal value choices, increased awareness of the group's values—seem productive of growth toward Christian adulthood. The glaring disadvantage is a lack of theological input; the Good News is still necessary.

Last and highly representative of the entire twelve-book Serendipity series by Lyman Coleman, *Beginnings* is an evangelical-based workbook-manual for small groups interested in personal spiritual growth. Intended for a wide audience, it will appeal primarily to emotionally and verbally mature teens, the age group most open to sharing in groups. Coleman structures affirmation as the key to the goal of *koinonia* when the group "has shifted . . . to a mysterious new control system where the Spirit is free to

move in and through members of the group."

Three parallel tracts with mixing suggestions provide program flexibility. Personal reflection, group sharing, and celebration comprise the rhythm of the group building and spiritual inventories tracts; although similar, the "depth Bible studies" tract concludes with personal application of Scripture and prayer. Recognizing the need for variety in a religious education program, Coleman includes alternative activities (party, worship service, discussion). In format and content, *Beginnings* will be familiar to Coleman users. Group dynamics instructions and philosophical rationale are, for example, virtually identical to the earlier *Rap* (1972) workbook; the most welcome additions are new sequences of activities for each tract.

Coleman's "mini-courses" can be used in home and parish groups—led (theoretically) by a non-professional religious educator—as an elective religion course and in short-term use for workshops and retreats. Using *Rap* and other Coleman books as resources in an on-going program—pulling out a particular activity that fits in with the theme being developed—has worked well for us. Group-building labs provide excellent activities during the early life of a group, while in-depth Bible studies can be used when the teens are ready to turn to Christ. Coleman's own experience is reflected in *Beginnings*; perhaps that's why it seems so promising.

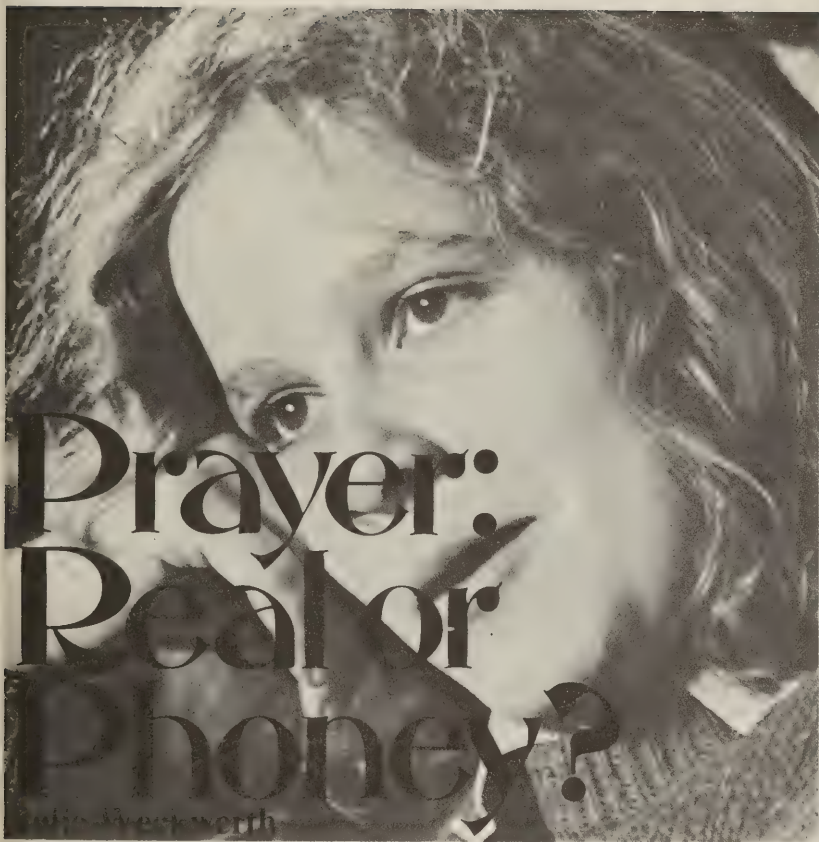
Once the goal of the teenage meeting has been decided, these books have supplied valuable activities. A typical two-hour session includes a "secular" activity from Reichert, Simon, or Coleman, followed by a small group discussion, a theological or witness presentation by an adult or teen leader to the large group, a Scripture-based activity (from Coleman or Reichert or created for a Simon-strategy), a final small group discussion, a shared prayer, and the inevitable soda. Longer time spans (four hours, eight hours, weekend retreats) permit several such sequences plus eucharistic liturgies, penance services, meditations on the Good News, and committee meetings (*à la* Lyman Coleman).

Clearly, the planning burden is on adult leaders when a single textbook is not used exclusively. Given the kaleidoscopic needs of our teenagers, isn't that the way it should be?

Richard Reichert. *The Real Thing* (Notre Dame, Indiana, Ave Maria Press, 1972).

Sidney B. Simon, Leland W. Howe, Howard Kirschenbaum. *Values Clarification: A Handbook of Practical Strategies for Teachers and Students* (New York, Hart Publishing Co., Inc., 1972).

Lyman Coleman. *Beginnings* (Waco, Texas, Creative Resources, 1974).



Rick Smolan

There is a crisis in terms of adolescent spirituality in the American Catholic Church today because there is a crisis in adult spirituality in that same Church. Religious educators in the Catholic community have no working educational model or any working formational model for their

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adolescent catechesis. *Adult* American spirituality is a nebulous, elusive animal not yet in ecclesial captivity. Our inability to capture the spiritual identity of older Church members makes the formational task of the catechist one which must leave even the ever-present Spirit somewhat breathless! For how can one "form" or catechize when the final existential reality remains so vague?

The faint-hearted catechist already casts aside his manuals, texts, projectors, recordings, tapes, slides, and similar teaching aids and disillusioned parents continue to decry the ultimate spiritual fate of their seemingly non-worshiping, non-committed offspring.

Religious educators who offered workshops, institutes, and seminars on such topics as curriculum, behavioral objectives, and individualizing or personalizing religious instruction were not adequately projecting either the scope or the depth of catechesis. It truly extends "beyond professionalism." For how can mere mechanics, techniques, structures, and pedagogical theories truly impart, or even embrace, the inner attitudes, the spirit of prayer and celebration, the vision of God's ever-transforming, renewing presence or the peculiar life-style that flows from a living understanding of the Good News and the community of believers? Personal response to God's self-communication is rarely enhanced by anything less than more intense interiorization of the Gospel message.

The goal then of the adult Church concerned about its adolescent segment should be one of *formation* rather than mere *information*. The elders need to uncover and purify values and to foster a sacramental life, a spiritual life, and the practice of prayer, supported and underpinned by a firm penetration and appreciation for the transformational power of the message.

It would appear that as adults became belated victims of a latching unto the Good News as social gospel (some 20 years behind our Protestant brethren), social action totally supplanted spirituality for some time and still perdures in some misguided catechetical circles. The prophetic aspects of the Christian message replaced, almost completely, its mystical aspects. And so the Christian life-style limped on the stunted appendage of its devotional life. Undoubtedly critical fingers will be waved at Vatican II which called for a re-evaluation of devotions as extensions of the liturgy. The re-evaluation caused a devotional cataclysm wherein many traditional prayer forms and pious practices became extinct or at least rare species. Few viable forms replaced them—producing a veritable devotional desert. The repercussions on younger Church members were similarly devastating. And interestingly enough, it has been only within the past two or three years that schools of spirituality are really coming to the fore. Archaic, anachronistic ecclesial symbol systems are slowly being replaced.

Three contemporary writers have addressed themselves to the problem of viable modern spirituality either blatantly, as in the case of Matthew Fox, O.P., or with the greater subtlety of a James Carroll or Anthony Padovano. Formational programs of adolescent spirituality could easily be built around Fox's *On Becoming a Musical, Mystical Bear*, Carroll's *Contemplation*, and Padovano's

Dawn Without Darkness. Of the three, Matthew Fox, a young mid-west Dominican, strikes out most directly at the dire need for an authentic *adult* American spirituality, warning that the problem currently is of critical, dramatic proportions. Fox contends that the former spirituality of practicing American Catholics was a questionable marriage of 17th-century French spirituality by way of the Irish-American clergy promulgated by Rome in Latin! With the demise of this former Western spirituality, Fox offers a skeletal framework for a contemporary replacement. The two pillars of any spirituality are one's culture and definition of prayer. Our culture (our basic symbol system) is in flux and our prayer definitions are presently being renewed. Our cultural crisis has been instrumental in causing the spirituality crisis. Economically, politically, educationally, and in terms of communication and lifestyle, Americans are being redefined. Fox offers us, and consequently our adolescents, a new definition of prayer "to fit" the new culture. He defines prayer as "a radical response to life!" It's a mystery-response to life rather than a problem-response. (Gabriel Marcel: "fundamentally vicious activity to reduce a mystery to a problem.") Prayer becomes a *radical* response—radical in the root sense. Spiritual life has two root aspects: one, wherein we uproot—life's prophetic side; two, wherein we sink roots in—the mystical side. This radicalness parallels Jesus' life wherein he lived not only prophetically—uprooting the enemies of life—but also mystically, sinking his

roots deeply into life. Jesus' prayer took place every time as a radical response to the mysteries of life—before he does anything of great significance. Likewise, then, spirituality should mean our life response. The *life* that Jesus is responding to, and we similarly, is *not culture*—for culture is relative—but the gift of life from the Father.

Fox's approach should have great appeal for adolescents in 1974. The prophetic aspect of pushing back and wrestling with the enemies of life with its social, activist dimensions would certainly be attractive to the involvement-seeking young person.

But more importantly at the identity-seeking time of adolescence, mysticism is also appealing for its psychological dimensions. The purpose of adolescence has been described as precisely that: The time to root oneself in mystery—to develop a capacity for mysticism. It is in this area that adolescent spirituality has been most aborted. When or where in the past decade has the adult Church proved either the leisure or the luxury of time for deep consciousness, deep reflection, deep "sinking in" for its young people? They have, rather, been shuffled from peak experience to peak experience with little or no time to digest or reflect on the meaning of the experiences. Yet the immediacy, the intimacy and the exhilaration of mystery are *real* needs for the adolescent.

Fox's value emerges even more clearly when he offers us ways to become

prayerful. The application and implementation for adolescence are obvious and immediate. They can be summed up in eight steps, remembering that prayerfulness is related to our experience of life (elders therefore should be more prayerful). The ways to form them in prayerfulness suggested are:

1. Awareness—through meditation and contemplation
2. Friendship—meditation with another
3. Travel—because it uproots us and shows us the relativity of our culture
4. Self-awareness — heightened by group experiences
5. Step back from conflicts—purify our rage; purify our love
6. Spiritual leaders—artists because they arouse the spiritual in us (concerts, ballets, etc.)
7. Prophets—uprooters from whom we learn courage
8. Appreciation—receptivity coupled with reverence

Thus the *total* life response of the adolescent need be touched.

James Carroll's *Contemplation* could likewise be used as a formative instrument—much like Matthew Fox's "sinking one's roots in." Carroll thus describes contemplation: "We have

begun to see differently. We have begun an act of contemplation, which is not seeing some different thing, but which is a different way of seeing. We rejoice to be here. It is that old transfiguring impulse. God is at it again." Carroll meets the Church with realism and a straight-in-the-eye look that the hypocrisy-despising adolescent can relate deeply to. He speaks of our current "common rediscovery of the contemplative spirit that is making us religious people again." Carroll likewise meets us at our culture-level—for the 1960's *had* "shocked us to the root," and, strangely enough, we find ourselves at prayer—a worshipful people! True to the style of the prose-poet that he is, he says: "Each of us does his own seeing; that is the beginning of contemplative vision." He and Fox are at one in their definition of prayer. For Carroll has it start with the lives we lead. Nostalgically perhaps, the sections on mortification for liberation and on ritual ring of the cultural pillar of Fox's American spirituality. This poet-author speaks of the counter-culture attempts. It is as if the young adults perceive that the cultural crisis rips away at the spiritual fabric of this country. There are signs that spirituality (or contemplation) is alive. Young men and women pursue full life and religious dedication in new ways! He offers the more staid members of the Church the task of *enabling* and supporting the call God *still* gives men and women in which they can sustain a contemplative vision.

Padovano's *Dawn Without Darkness*

complements the contemporary brand of adolescent spirituality emerging from the previous sources. Perhaps the most crucial contribution of this book lies in the description of prayer proffered. Padovano gives a highly practical "test" for real prayer—are we capable of doing things after prayer that we were not capable of if we hadn't prayed? Jesus could not have endured Calvary without Gethsemane, he points out. In another section, the reader is advised that the spiritual power of Jesus lies not so much with his words as with the expression and impact of his life-style. Once again, a radical life-response is significant.

What emerges so forcefully and pointedly in terms of evolving a contemporary American adolescent spirituality from the three sources and the well of personal experience of adults dealing with today's young people is that their spirituality is inextricably woven with their life-response—their life-style. Radical applies equally to their response—their prayer—their prophecy—and yes, even their doubt. The two-edged sword of prophecy *and* mysticism (rather than an imbalanced either/or view) is the very cutting edge of this new devotional mode of being. The adults in the believing community are enablers, supporters, and incarnations of doctrine. Sacramental actions, a spirit of prayer, a wrestling with life's injustices, and a profound respect and penetration of life's mystery characterize the neo-spirituality. We as the elders who welcome in this new form

of piety might take as our *raison d'être*: To be . . . to be holy . . . and to make that holiness attractive!

A Liturgy Celebrating Peace and Justice



John W. Glaser

Ann Macksoud

The subject of peace and justice is fast becoming the religious cliché of the 1970's. The term itself is alienating hundreds of dedicated religious who feel that peace and justice begin at home, that contact with children in the classroom is their contribution to peace and justice, and that involve-

ment in the problems of the migrant worker, lettuce boycotts and multinational corporations is impossible when the teachers themselves are already exhausted by the immediate demands and deadlines of the understaffed schools in which they work.

If this is the attitude of so many of our teachers, what hope is there for the social consciousness raising (to use another 1970's cliché) of the

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thousands of young people whom they teach?

Peace and justice *does* begin at home, but "home" is only the beginning. The Christian's responsibility must be nothing less than cosmic in scope. He must be concerned not only with the individual person, but with the systems and institutions that oppress whole nations of people. The freeing of an individual slave in 1850 was no more the solution to the problem of slavery than is the establishing of a soup kitchen in 1974 the solution to the problems of poverty and hunger.

Some of us may be especially called to free the individual slave or to feed a particular hungry man, but others are called to attack the systems which perpetuate these evils. It is essential that young Christians become increasingly aware of their own responsibilities in these matters if they are to make any difference at all in this world.

Perhaps one small step in helping our young people (and ourselves) to acquire a broader concern for "neighbor" would be to prepare a special liturgy for the children, their teachers and their parents, a liturgy in which the themes of peace (and its absence) and justice (and its absence) would be dealt with both locally and globally—i.e. the worship celebration would concern itself with personal good and evil as well as social good and evil and would lead directly to some peace-making action beyond the classroom or the home.

The following format for the celebration of the Eucharist is only one of hundreds of ways of attempting to come to terms with the demands of the Gospel of Jesus Christ. The "script" for the liturgy is presented in great detail with the hope of being helpful to the already too busy teacher, but any or all of the suggestions should be tailored to the needs of the particular ethnic, social and economic groups of children and to the aesthetic tastes of those preparing the celebration.

I. Entrance Rite

Rather than coming into church (or whatever space is chosen) to the expected entrance hymn, the celebrant, robed in purple vestments, enters to the sound of a drum or a clapper—the kind used as substitute for bells in the Good Friday rites of old. A kettle drum, if available, is ideal because of its somber resonance, but any sound effect that suggests a certain austerity and seriousness of purpose will serve to set the tone of the entire liturgy. It might also, because it is unexpected, predispose those present to attend more carefully to what is to follow.

The celebrant prostrates himself before the altar with the drum or clapper sounding its insistent rhythm all the while. The sound stops as the celebrant rises and turns to speak to the congregation. He begins with a simple and honest admission of his own failings in the areas of peace and justice—perhaps something like this:

"My friends, I have failed in attacking injustice and spreading peace as often as I have succeeded. I have run when I should have stood fast, kept silent when I should have spoken, spoken when it would have been better to keep silence. But my failings and sins, like yours, can be forgiven because we do not celebrate this Eucharist in *my* name or in *your* names. We celebrate it . . .

(all) In the name of the Father
and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

The energy, strength and conviction with which the priest and congregation say the doxology is another important tone-setting moment. During the week prior to the liturgy, the children should practice making the same sign of blessing the priest makes so that they can make it with him rather than blessing themselves in the usual way. Most people begin Mass with a sign of the cross which, if it is made at all, is so perfunctory that its significance is completely wasted. Perhaps if the children use the priestly blessing, making it with precision and care, some of its sign-power will be restored, giving the congregation some hint that they are about to embark upon an awesome journey which will take them through death and resurrection, a journey they would never dare to make in their own names.

II. *Penance Rite*

Four good readers are needed (ideal-

ly a combination of children and adults) for the penance litany. They should be spaced somewhat apart in the sanctuary and given sufficient rehearsal time in the week or weeks prior to the liturgy to do justice to the poem. If the readers can work without microphones, so much the better. If the congregation is large and microphones necessary, some adjustment should be made in the placement of the readers.

(solo A)

I went back home not so long ago
And, as though in a bad dream,
I saw the odd boy we teased
Religiously in grammar school.

(A,B,C,D)

(God, damn us)

(solo B)

We used to stomp on his hat,
Throw his scarf in the bushes,

(B & D)

Push him in circles,

(B, D, & C)

Take his books away,
Make confetti of his homework,

(solo B)

Trip him on the stairway,
Snowball his head,

(A, B, C, D)

(Christ, forgive us)

(A,B,C,D)

(solo C)

(Christ, comfort us)

Sing rhymes about his brain,
And his clothes,

(solo A)

(solo A)

And he jumped from the bridge
On the outskirts of town
But he couldn't fall hard enough
To die.

And his walk,

(solo D)

(solo C)

And his hair,
And his weight,

They say he walks through town
every morning,
And then goes home to hide in bed.

(solo B)

(solo B)

And his sister,
And his parents,

He waved to me from across the
street that day.

(A,B,C,D,)

(solo D)

And his breath,
And his eyes,

And he called me by name.

(solo C)

(A,B,C,D)

And his tears,

(Christ, crucify me)

(A,B,C,D,)

(A,B,C,D, & celebrant)

(Christ, cleanse us)

Amen.

(solo C)

(*A Litany* by Dan Masterson)

And his stutter,

(solo D)

And, for Christ's sake,
All he ever did was turn
The other cheek.
Finally, his mind snapped,

The litany should sound as if one person were reading it. If this method of dividing the parts among four readers sounds choppy instead of interesting, or if it distracts from the message, the poem should be read by reader A, with B, C & D joining only on the sections in parenthesis. Dividing the

parts is not intended to be a gimmick. It is an attempt to emphasize visually and aurally the fact that we all share in the guilt and in the agony of both the victimizers and the victim of this poem.

Following the poem, there should be a brief period of silence. The silence is broken by a repetition of the drum or clapper rhythm with which the Mass began. Over this sound, the celebrant and readers (who have held their positions during the silence) introduce the first Scripture reading with fragments of the penance litany.

(celebrant)

God, damn us.

(A,B,C & D)

Christ, forgive us.

(celebrant)

Christ, cleanse us.

(A,B,C & D)

Christ, comfort us.

(celebrant)

Christ, crucify us.

(A,B,C & D)

Christ, crucify me.

(A,B,C,D & celebrant)

Amen.

III. First Reading

As all readers and the celebrant say "Amen," a fifth reader, seated in the midst of the congregation, stands and, without introduction, begins the reading.

Remember this, my brothers and sisters, you must do what the Word of God tells you and not just listen to it. To listen to the word of God and not to do what it tells you to do is like studying your own face in a mirror and then going off and immediately forgetting what you looked like. But the person who looks steadily at the demands of the Word of God, not listening and then forgetting, will be happy in all that he does.

(celebrant) This is the Word of the Lord.

(congregation) Thanks be to God.

Another brief silence follows to allow the words of St. James to register in ears that are unused to listening carefully to readings at Mass. It would be interesting to hand out a questionnaire during the offertory of a typical parish Sunday Mass to see the percentage of people who remember the message of any of the Scripture passages that have just been read to them. One of the reasons, perhaps, is that there are three readings, a responsorial psalm, homily, creed and prayer of the faithful packed back to back in the first fifteen or twenty minutes of the Mass. The Liturgy of the Word is smothered by "words," and minds adept at blocking out the noises of twentieth-century technol-

ogy block out this verbal bombardment as well. The Liturgy of the Word for this celebration for children is deliberately stripped of all the introductions, citations and collects that give the signal of what is to follow. It is hoped that the readings, beginning and ending abruptly and punctuated by periods of silence, will keep the ears open and the minds engaged.

IV. GOSPEL

The celebrant gives no invitation to stand.

Let us listen to Jesus' seven point plan for being a Christian:

Feed the hungry
Give drink to the thirsty
Shelter the homeless
Clothe the naked
Visit the sick
Visit the imprisoned
Bury the dead

(Matthew 25:36-41)

Each of the seven points is followed by a drum (clapper) beat in the same rhythm as the command so that the percussionist and the celebrant mimic one another in a crisp and definite proclamation of the corporal works of mercy.

V. Homily

The homily should be brief and to the point, in the same mood as the Gospel. The celebrant need only ask the congregation to reflect upon each of the seven points of the Gospel and to

judge themselves as to how well they meet the demands. There will not be many, perhaps not *any* who will pass the test, but failing need not be a cause for discouragement. The purpose of this liturgy, and of our prayer lives in general, is not to focus on our failures but, having acknowledged them and asked pardon for them, to move quickly on to the business of becoming more and more what we are called to be.

VI. Offertory

Several days prior to the day of the liturgy, the children should discuss with their teachers the practical possibilities of what services they might perform in their own and neighboring communities—such things as visiting hospitals, orphanages and old people's homes, reading to the blind, writing to or visiting someone in prison, mowing lawns or washing cars to raise money for a family in need, and writing to a mayor or congressman concerning some situation that needs correction. There are hundreds of possibilities in each community, and young people are usually responsive and inventive in such discussions. This is true not only for religion class. Social studies class and science class (if there is need for ecological action within a community) should provide the environments for the discussions in order to dispel the notion that Christian behavior is expected only in connection with something discussed in religion class.

Research should be done and phone

calls made to various institutions to see if the children's services are needed and welcome. When all the research is finished (it would be valuable to allow the students to do as much of this research as possible), each one who wishes to participate in the projects should choose one of the listed activities and write down his commitment to it in the form of a very specific promise (i.e., I promise to bake cookies and take them to the patients at Oakdale Nursing Home on Thursday, March 28 at 4 P.M.). The promises should be written on special note paper, sealed in envelopes, and brought up with the bread and wine on the day of the liturgy. The organizational problems that arise could be handled in various ways, but the time for actually writing the promises should be very formal—a sort of ritual in itself.

At the offertory the promise envelopes are shaken together in a basket (as at a raffle) and each student comes forward to draw a promise. If the group is small enough, each one should open his envelope and read its contents to the others. If the group is large, this would become tedious and destroy the mood of expectation which has been built. In this case only a few representatives should read their promises aloud.

If the raffle idea appeals to the young people, they will have to be willing to take their chances on what project they might receive. If they prefer to choose their projects and the people with whom they will work, they should write out their promises in the

same way described above, but instead of putting them in a general basket, they should keep them carefully until the day of the liturgy and bring them up at the offertory to be read to the rest of the group.

The suspense of the raffle and the students' willingness to relinquish control over what service they will perform and with whom they will perform it seems to be the greater value, but if this method might jeopardize the keeping of the promises or the quality of the services rendered, the second option should undoubtedly be chosen.

VII. Our Father

This Mass would be a good time to resurrect the phrase "We *dare* to say Our Father." The problems of peace and justice will be solved only by people with the courage to take the risks that a dare implies. We have so watered down the impact of the Christian message with our updated theologies that, in most cases, the dares and the risks are gone. They are replaced by ideas that are "safe" if not sound and rituals that transform the extraordinary into the ordinary. Even the ashes which mark the beginning of Lent have been stripped of the words which remind man that from dust he came and to dust he shall return. Instead, the celebrant may say: "Repent and receive the Good News." The head-on confrontation with the terrifying reality of death is risky. People, we think, don't want to be reminded of the fact

that they will die, and since we don't want to turn anyone away, we emasculate the message, robbing it of its strength, its terror and its beauty and then wonder why people, especially young people, lose interest in religious ritual, flocking instead to *The Exorcist* where the ritual, whatever else it may or may not be, is certainly *not* watered down, colorless and haphazardly performed.

Daring to call God "Father," daring to receive him in the Word and in the bread, daring to accept the responsibilities Christianity demands—these dares are not to be taken lightly. We forget that the Good News of the Christian message contains a great deal of "bad news" for those who refuse to listen to it. Along with the promise come threats about weeping and gnashing of teeth, about rich young men who go away sad, and about the easy path and wide gate to destruction. Most of us stand somewhere between the threat and the promise in the comfortable land of the ineffectual Christian.

VIII. Closing Rites

After the reception of Communion (for which the students should bake the bread and be allowed to receive from the chalice), there is a third period of silence which the celebrant breaks to give the final blessing. He leaves the church accompanied by the same drum (clapper) rhythm to which he entered.

If the class, for some reason other

than unwillingness to do all the necessary research and careful organization that such a project requires, has been unable to choose various service activities described in section VI, perhaps this liturgy could be timed in such a way that the students follow the celebrant out of the church and on to waiting buses that will take them to sing at a hospital or nursing home. "Let us go forth to love and serve the Lord" is seldom followed by any immediate manifestation of love and service. We forget that the phrase is not only a suggestion but a command to which we should not "dare" to respond "Thanks be to God" unless we are really willing to accept the challenge.

There are no suggestions for songs in this liturgy. Its mood does not call for much, if any, singing. During Communion a selection from an appropriate record could be played (the beginning of Poulenc's *Stabat Mater* or part of the slow 3rd movement of the *Brahms Piano Concerto #2* would both be appropriate).

Whether or not one uses drumbeats, poems and promises at a liturgical celebration on peace and justice is unimportant. The important thing is that we provide opportunities for young Christians to put their action and their prayer together (relating the one specifically to the other) so that they begin to realize that Christianity involves the *doing* of what they pray. If they, and we, become more aware of the fact that the Good

News is shot through with constant and unequivocal warnings about the lukewarm position in which most of us remain, we might find that we are able to accept the "dare" of the Gospel and move beyond the threat into the promise.



Bro. Lawrence K. Clem

CCD Becomes A Retreat

Richard Costello

Retreat-going was once a solemn, pious affair. People went as a group and returned as a group, but the time in between was spent in silence and prayer analyzing one's relationship with God. The only church groups that went voluntarily were the Holy Name Society and the Legion of Mary. Retreat programs for teenagers were usually restricted to Catholic high school seniors, who

had to go if they wanted to graduate.

Retreat programs today, however, are usually joyous community affairs. No longer do established parish organizations have a corner on retreat facilities. Many CCD programs, which five years previously were struggling with dwindling numbers, have begun to discover the value and the dynamic catechetical possibilities of a weekend program for teenagers.

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Although the present excitement in weekend programs for young adults is encouraging, there is a danger inherent in any new-found enthusiasm. As with any catechetical tool, the value and overall effectiveness of the approach rests upon a solid understanding of what we are doing and how we are doing it.

Weekend programs for teenagers can indeed be an effective catechetical ingredient to any religious education program, provided that they are well planned and well executed and that the personnel running them have an understanding of the theological implications of what they are doing.

Many retreat programs for young adults which have been in existence for a number of years, such as Search, Teens Encounter Christ, and the Christian Awakening, have been successful primarily because they have managed to wed successfully a solid doctrinal input with a dynamic methodology. If we were to dissect these programs, or any effective program for that matter, I believe we would find that there are certain ingredients present which are important for all religious education personnel to consider before organizing or running a retreat for teenagers.

1. *Careful preparation is a prerequisite for retreat planning.* Vibrant, growth-producing education requires an enormous amount of forethought, planning and preparation on the part of the educator. If retreats are seen as part of the overall catechetical thrust of a parish or school religious

education program, then the same amount of effort must be expended in their creation and implementation as in any other educational endeavor.

Retreats should not be something "added on to" or "in connection with" the total religious education program, but should spring naturally from what has been going on all year. Those who plan a weekend experience for teens should set limited goals and objectives for the weekend itself; these goals and objectives should be structured in such a way that they magnify or enhance what has been talked about and discussed in the CCD class or religion class.

Education of any kind fails when it forgets the person being educated and centers only on techniques and models. This dictum holds true in retreat planning. What are these particular teenagers ready for? How can we gently and patiently lead them to take the next step in their spiritual growth? These are some of the questions that must be asked before beginning the actual structuring of a weekend retreat program. Obviously this kind of questioning requires that those involved in retreat work have taken the time and effort to get to know the teens with whom they are working.

One way of insuring that the retreat weekend is meeting the religious needs of teenagers is to involve them in the planning and implementation of the program. One very practical advantage of involving the teens in the preparation of the program is

that it helps create enthusiasm among them for the retreat. The weekend then becomes their weekend and they are the ones ultimately who must "sell it" to their peers.

2. *The purpose of retreat is best served when it is a community experience.* Church community, teenage community, local community, community project—these are just a few of the multitudinous ways that the word "community" is thrown around these days. I even know of one high school where they now call their home rooms "communities." Simply speaking, the word "community" does create the reality. Nowhere has the word been more overused than in religious education. The problem, however, rests not in the frequency with which we use the word, but rather with the context in which it is spoken.

A great deal of criticism has been leveled at the catechetical movement in this country for its seeming preoccupation with process rather than with communicating doctrine. Perhaps the criticism is justified in some instances, but I doubt that any serious religious educator ignores "kerygma" for the sake of "didache."

The whole incarnational process tells us "that the Word became a human being and lived among us" (John 1:14). Seeing religious education as process of involvement in a salvific community, then, did not originate at Louvain or Tübingen, but rather had Bethlehem itself as its place of origin.

If doctrine is to be more than a mere verbalization of an unexperienced reality, then we must provide young people with the context in which they can understand and experience the realities of Christian belief.

The tremendous potential that a weekend retreat program possesses is that it can provide teenagers with a glimpse of Church as community. Retreat weekends provide an ideal learning atmosphere; in the living together, sharing together, eating together atmosphere, the teen can begin to taste and to see the reality of what it is that he has been baptized into, who it is that he has to minister to through confirmation, and what it is that we give thanks for at the Eucharist.

Words and concepts spoken in the CCD class or in the high school religion class can take on a new meaning during the weekend together. One senior in high school put it this way: "I came back wanting to be a Christian and wanting people to know I was a Christian. Usually you see something bad in people. When I came back I started looking for the good. I started thinking, 'What if I were that person and people didn't like me for that one bad quality?' So I started looking for the good that would make him a good person to know."

A weekend retreat experience can be a further experience of community because it involves young people and adults at the faith level. Community is thwarted by polarization and division and yet much of religious educa-

tion is a "for young people only" experience. Adults teach the class and the teenagers listen. If Church is to be understood not as a group of isolated Christians, staring at one another across the chasm of age, then more attempts must be made to bring people together at the faith level, regardless of age.

The process of building a sense of community is best served not by people sharing facts with one another, but by people sharing the depth of their own religious experiences. Adults who wish to lead the young, whether it be in the classroom or on retreat, should consider seriously what fosters leadership rather than division. Henri Nouwen in his book *The Wounded Healer* puts it this way: "The Christian leader is, therefore, first of all, a man who is willing to put his own articulated faith at the disposal of those who ask his help . . . his own faith and doubt, his own hope and despair, his own light and darkness at the disposal of others who want to find a way through their confusion and touch the solid core of life."

Adults and teens working together to plan and helping together to run a retreat weekend can be the archetype of the model of an integrated Church community for which we all hunger and strive. It is much easier, however, to invite people to become part of a group or organization that already exists than it is to organize disparate individuals to form a closely defined group. If the adults and teens who

help to plan a retreat weekend can themselves begin to grow together in a sense of caring and concern (a process which focuses itself through prayer), then building a sense of Christian community on retreat is not something that must be done *ex nihilo*. Rather, a Christian community already exists and the process becomes one of inclusion rather than creation.

3. *Retreats can provide a context for effective youth-to-youth ministry.* Many times religious educators, priests, and youth ministers assume that effective ministry takes place only when they are present. There is, however, another possibility for effective ministry among teens, and that possibility finds its realization in the type of peer group interaction that characterizes the youth-to-youth ministry. A retreat weekend can be an ideal opportunity to foster and give direction to the responsibility that teenagers have of ministering to one another.

If the retreat weekend is to include a number of talks, then some of the teens should be invited to make a couple of the presentations. Obviously, a lot of time and effort must be expended in helping the teens prepare the talks so that they are in harmony with the theme of the weekend. All teenagers have their own personal story to tell of their striving and reaching for God. Only they can tell that story, and we deprive them of a unique opportunity of being witnesses to one another of "good news" if we do not at least provide them with a

context of effectively transmitting that message. Again, if discussion is to be part of the weekend retreat experience, then perhaps, with careful preparation beforehand, the teenagers themselves should act as discussion leaders.

How exactly teens should be involved and the extent and direction of their involvement will depend heavily upon the format chosen for that particular weekend. It is important, however, to remember that we cannot be telling teens that they are responsible, fully participating members of the Church unless we at the same time offer them real responsibility and adequate opportunities for involvement.

4. Structuring a retreat is essential. At times, people who plan retreats spend a disproportionate amount of their time worrying about how they are going to coerce the teens into going to bed and prevent them from destroying the retreat facilities than they spend in trying to insure that they have a quality program. Many times "discipline" problems are created not so much by angry or malicious teenagers as by bored teenagers. Any retreat that is worth having should be an exciting religious education experience. If it does not fulfill that criterion, then it is probably not worth having.

A good mixture of talking, listening, and doing are essential ingredients to effective planning. It takes any group of people time to begin to feel comfortable with one another before a sense of "groupness" begins to de-

velop. Care should be taken to provide opportunities for the group to feel at ease with one another. This is perhaps best accomplished through some sort of "ice-breaking" technique.

If liturgy is to be part of the weekend program, then the liturgy should be so situated in the program that it becomes the focal point of all that has taken place prior to it, and as a springboard for all that will take place after.

Care should also be taken to insure that the structure of the weekend provides more than an opportunity for play or psych-up for Christianity. Teenagers are by nature excitable and enthusiastic; that excitement and enthusiasm should be channeled and directed into a realistic presentation of Christianity—a type of Christianity that is possible to attain.

5. Follow-up is a vital aspect of retreat work. I once taught in a high school with a football team that could be characterized most charitably as unathletic. The team had only won one game in the previous two seasons. Yet in September, a pep rally was organized, the band played, the team was introduced, and the coach gave an inspiring talk on how the team was going to "win it all this year." The team then proceeded to go out and lose the opening game and every game after that. I always felt that in some sense an injustice had been committed to the team, as well as to the student body.

The same sort of injustice can be perpetrated by retreat directors if they send teenagers away from a weekend program with no provision for follow-up.

If, as we have said, one of the goals of a weekend is to foster a sense of community among the participants, then care should be taken to provide the teens with a possibility of continuing that process once a weekend is over.

Christianity is not a weekend commitment. It is a process that comes to birth when the individual is willing to affirm his baptism, but comes to fruition only through constant support and encouragement from the Christian community. Such a support mechanism must be provided for those who leave a retreat and have to continue the process of living out their Christianity in a different type of environment than what they experienced on the weekend.

At times structuring an effective follow-up program will require a great deal of rethinking and reorganization at the local level. A strictly educational setting (be it CCD or religion class) does not provide a model conducive to fostering the type of follow-up that would flow naturally from the retreat experience, especially if that experience has been characterized by a certain formality.

The purpose of effective follow-up is best served when the atmosphere is such that each feels free to share with others his own attempts to grow as a

Christian, a chance to play together and a challenge to reach out beyond himself to others. In this type of a setting, there is no need to make a distinction between adult and teen. All are Christians, struggling together to come to a greater understanding of their faith, to express that faith through prayer, and to act out that faith through service to the larger community.

ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM

by John and Catherine Nelson

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this educational supplement is to provide a practical plan for adult religious education: This plan will be based on selected articles from each issue of **NEW CATHOLIC WORLD** and will provide adult education programs for eight weeks.

Each session will be built upon key articles and will explode outward from these experiences, information, and group techniques.

The **NEW CATHOLIC WORLD ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM** provides:

- continuous preplanned adult education program
- rich range of topics
- short-term commitment
- CCD teacher-enrichment program
- probing content—articles on today's issues integrated with experience-centered educational plans
- educational tools that are practical and spark interest

The creation of a climate conducive to learning is very important. A proper climate in an educational setting should help people be at ease and should stimulate sharing as well as personal activity. Clear, concise directions and careful preparation will facilitate this. Therefore:

- the director should prepare carefully beforehand.
- participants should have read the related articles.
- if a series of directions are given the director should wait until one

stage is completed before announcing the next stage.

- the purpose of each session as well as its relation to the whole should be explained.

I. FIRST WEEK PROGRAM

(90 Minutes)

PROFILE OF YOUTH

A. INTRODUCTION

- The aim of this session is to understand the attitudes of youth toward faith and morality.
- Participants should have read Forliti's article.
- Supplies: copies of Forliti's four statements on newsprint in sufficient number for small groups of five or six, NCW issue, magic markers for each small group.

B. EDUCATIONAL PLAN

(5 Minutes)

1. Director introduces aim of session. He should make clear to the group that Forliti's findings result from a recent three-year study in Minneapolis-St. Paul.
(10 Minutes)

2. Divide the participants into groups of five or six. Allow a few minutes to become acquainted and to select a recorder for each group.
(30 Minutes)

3. The task of each group is to compare their own experience with the findings as described by For-

liti. This can be accomplished by:
 (a) Each participant registers his agreement with each of the four statements on a scale of 0 to 5 (0 = complete disagreement, 5 = complete agreement). (b) Each participant explains to the group why he agrees or disagrees with the statements. (c) The recorder formulates some consensus report from the group.

(20 Minutes)

4. Presentation of small groups' discussion. Each recorder summarizes what has occurred in the small groups. The director comments upon any pattern which has emerged. If the group is not too large, this can even be done statistically.

(20 Minutes)

5. The group should address itself to this question:

—How can the members of this group bring about or maintain in their local community the situation described so optimistically by Forliti for Minneapolis-St. Paul?

(5 Minutes)

6. In preparation for the next session, the director asks each participant to interview two or three adolescents in terms of Forliti's statements and the findings of this first session.

—Participants should have read DiGiacomo's article and have interviewed some adolescents on the four statements of Forliti.

—Materials: NCW issue, Bible.

B. EDUCATIONAL PLAN

(5 Minutes)

1. Director states the aim of the session. He links it with the prior meeting by noting:

—Forliti's article derives from a statistical survey.

—DiGiacomo relies upon his own educational experience in teaching high school students, in working with high school teachers and in writing high school curriculum.

(10 Minutes)

2. Director asks a sampling of the group to report the extent to which the interviewed adolescents agreed or disagreed with Forliti's statements. This should be done briefly. He should comment on any patterns which emerge.

(30 Minutes)

3. Divide the participants into groups of five or six. The task of each group is to respond to the following questions. A recorder should draw up a summary statement for each question within the group. (a) *What* does DiGiacomo say about youth (cognitive dimension of the article)? (b) *How* does he approach relations between adults and adolescents (affective dimension)? (c) To what extent do the participants concur cognitively and affectively with the article?

4. An alternate approach would be to invite two adolescents to participate in each small group.

(20 Minutes)

5. Presentation of small groups' discussion. Recorders summarize

II. SECOND WEEK PROGRAM

(90 Minutes)

BEGINNING WITH THE HUMAN

A. INTRODUCTION

—The purpose of this session is to understand from an educator's point of view the attitudes of youth toward faith and morality.

what has occurred in the smaller groupings. Director invites participants to reflect on possible patterns which emerge.

(15 Minutes)

6. Director guides large group in discussion of the following question:

—To what extent is DiGiacomo describing adults as well as adolescents with regard to religious belief?

(10 Minutes)

7. Conclude with a prayer service. Two participants chosen beforehand read Is. 42:1-4, and Mt. 13:44-46. Director invites members to reflect on these texts, either in silence or aloud. He closes with a brief prayer.

III. THIRD WEEK PROGRAM

(90 Minutes)

ADULTS WITH YOUTH

A. INTRODUCTION

- The goal of this session is to reflect upon an integrated approach to youth ministry.
- Participants should have read Warren's article.
- Materials: NCW issue, prepared newsprint (cf. #2 below), magic markers, masking tape

B. EDUCATIONAL PLAN

(10 Minutes)

1. Director can link the first two weeks to this session as follows:
 - He summarizes what the group has discovered about adolescents and their religious belief.
 - He points out that this week's session looks more to what shape this religious belief can take in a time of transition.

(10 Minutes)

2. A member of the group should present a prepared summary of the highlights of Warren's article. Key phrases and his four opening statements should have been written on newsprint so as to be visible to the whole group.

(25 Minutes)

3. The director invites the large group to react to the four state-of Warren about what is no longer possible in the faith life of adolescents. This can be done in one of the following ways:

—By discussion within the larger group.

—By role-playing. One person would take a contrary view.

—By tracing a line on the floor (masking tape serves well) and asking several participants to take a stand on the line which represents their extent of agreement. (0 to 5 scale).

(30 Minutes)

4. Participants divide into group of five or six. Their task is to respond to the following questions. A recorder should summarize the response within each small group.
 - If they grant the four statements of Warren as essentially true, how do they replace the forms of religious belief which are no longer possible?
 - How do they retain what was valid from the past?
5. An alternate approach: If adolescents did not take part in the second session it would be very helpful to have them present in this session.

(15 Minutes)

6. Presentation of small groups' discussion. Recorders report to the large group. Director invites participants' reflections and comments.

IV. FOURTH WEEK PROGRAM (90 Minutes)

STRUCTURING YOUTH MINISTRY

A. INTRODUCTION

- The aim of this session is to become acquainted with various models for youth ministry.
- Participants should have read the articles by Costello, McDonell and Roach.
- Materials: NCW issue, copies of the books mentioned in Roach's article if possible.

B. EDUCATIONAL PLAN (10 Minutes)

1. Director states the aim of the session. He makes clear that the articles deal with three different but complementary approaches to youth ministry. He explains that:
 - McDonell's approach is more academic.
 - Roach's is focused on contact with youth in non-academic settings.
 - Costello's treats an intensive day or weekend.

(5 Minutes)

2. Director explains the process for this session:
 - The participants will divide into three groups.
 - Each group will deal with one of the three articles.
 - Each group will report back to all the participants.

(45 Minutes)

3. The members of the three groups proceed as follows:

Group A: McDonell's article—React to the five myths and realities from the beginning of this article. To what

extent is the group in agreement with this presentation? How well does or would individualized instruction respond to the needs of the youth in their local community? A recorder summarizes the group's position.

Group B: Roach's article—A participant prepared for the task beforehand leads the group through one or more of the exercises mentioned in this article. The group reflects upon the value of this exercise and formulates a statement which begins: "We have learned. . ."

Group C: Costello's article—A participant or guest who has taken part in such a day or weekend testifies to what occurred. The group questions him on it and reflects upon the value of such experiences for the youth in their local community. A recorder summarizes the group's discussion.

(30 Minutes)

4. Presentation of small groups' findings. The recorders relate in brief what has happened in each group. The director invites the participants to comment upon and to question the experience of the other groups.

V. FIFTH WEEK PROGRAM

(90 Minutes)

MORAL FORMATION

A. INTRODUCTION

- The goal of this session is to clarify our understanding of what it means to be moral with particular application to adolescents.
- Participants should read Reichert's article.
- Materials: NCW issue, newsprint, magic markers.

B. EDUCATIONAL PLAN

(5 Minutes)

1. Director sets up the topic in this way:

- The first four sessions concentrated upon *who* adolescents are and *how* they grow in faith.

- This and the following two sessions give more emphasis to *what* they learn, that is, the content of religious belief.

(15 Minutes)

2. To bring to consciousness what the group thinks of morality, the director invites them to participate in a simple word game. Each person, in no particular order, says what comes to his mind when he hears the word morality. Someone records the responses on newsprint or on a chalkboard. The director notes any pattern which forms.

(20 Minutes)

3. Volunteers who have been contacted beforehand role-play the following situation:

A teacher has been conducting a high school class in religion according to the point of view presented by Reichert. A parent or fellow teacher would prefer

moral education based upon objective moral law such as found in the Ten Commandments. They discuss their differences.

After eight to ten minutes, others from the group may without preparation volunteer to do the same.

(30 Minutes)

4. Participants divide into groups of five or six. Their task is twofold:

- To react to Reichert's concluding definition of moral formation: "Moral formation consists essentially in helping the adolescent from an accurate awareness of his own goodness, dignity, and destiny." The group may do so by taking a stand on a continuum scaled 0 to 5. Recorder keeps a summary of each group's reaction.
- To formulate specific ways in which moral formation best takes place among adolescents, that is, what are the learning structures which are most effective toward this end?

(20 Minutes)

5. Presentation of small groups' sharings. Recorders report to the large group. Director invites the participants to reflect aloud on the groups' findings.

VI. SIXTH WEEK PROGRAM

(90 Minutes)

TEACHING CHRIST JESUS

A. INTRODUCTION

- The purpose of this session is to evaluate for adolescent catechesis three current understandings of the person of Jesus.

- Participants should have read Nelson's article.

- Supplies: NCW issue, Bible.

B. EDUCATIONAL PLAN

(5 Minutes)

1. Director begins this session by reading the Scripture passage Mk. 8: 27-30. He then explains that Nelson's article attempts to evaluate three different answers being given by contemporary men and women to this question.

(30 Minutes)

2. A panel of three participants chosen beforehand present prepared summaries of the three understandings of Jesus explained in the article. They are encouraged to illustrate their presentation by reference to song or art.

(30 Minutes)

3. The participants then address themselves to the following questions. If the group is too large, smaller groups may be formed at this time.

—With which of these approaches to Jesus am I most at home? Why?

—Which one do I judge most appealing to youth? Why?

—With which one are youth most ill at ease? Why?

A recorder should summarize the group's position.

(15 Minutes)

4. In the light of their personal experience of faith and of their contact with adolescents, volunteers from the group present simply and directly how they think Jesus should be presented to young people today.

(10 Minutes)

5. The participants conclude the session with a scriptural service. There are three readings:

—Mk. 8:27-30, the passage from the Gospel which opened the session.

—Phil. 2:5-11, an early Christian hymn about Christ.

—Col. 1:15-20, a more developed hymn.

The director allows time for reflection between each reading. He concludes with a prayer known by all such as the Our Father.

VII. SEVENTH WEEK PROGRAM

(90 Minutes)

SPIRITUALITY

A. INTRODUCTION

—The aim of this session is to understand both the mystical and the prophetic dimensions of religious belief.

—Participants should have read the articles by Weckwerth, Mack-soud, and Nelson.

—Materials: NCW issue, newsprint, magic markers, books mentioned in Weckwerth's article if possible.

B. EDUCATIONAL PLAN

(5 Minutes)

1. Director introduces the aim of this session. He should clarify briefly by way of example the distinction between the mystical and prophetic dimensions of religious belief.

(20 Minutes)

2. A participant chosen beforehand presents the highlights of Weckwerth's article. The use of a chalkboard or newsprint is recommended. The director invites questions and observations from the group on Weckwerth's article.

(5 Minutes)

3. One of the participants chosen beforehand presents a brief, prepared summary of what the group had concluded the previous

week with regard to Nelson's article.

(25 Minutes)

4. The participants divide into groups of five or six. Their task is to respond to the following questions:

—As a matter of emphasis do they in their own lives favor the mystical approach (as does Weckwerth) or the prophetic (as indicated by Nelson)?

—Which emphasis do they think is more suitable for adolescents? Why?

—How can an integration of the two approaches be achieved?

(10 Minutes)

6. Director recalls in brief the liturgy proposed in Macksoud's article. He asks for reaction to it in terms of the following questions:

—Which approach to religious belief does it most embody?

—How do you react to it as a form of prayer and why?

—In what circumstances would you use this liturgy with young people?

—Supplies: NCW issue, newsprint, magic markers.

B. EDUCATIONAL PLAN

(10 Minutes)

1. Director opens the session by explaining its goal. He presents in review the areas which evoked most interest within the group over the past weeks' sessions.

(5 Minutes)

2. Director explains in brief the process for this session which is as follows.

(25 Minutes)

3. Participants forms groups of three. Each person in turn expresses one or two questions still unanswered in his mind. The other two members answer these questions as best they can.

(10 Minutes)

4. Participants return to the large group. A member from each small group presents the questions which surfaced but which received no satisfactory answer therein. A recorder notes these questions on the chalkboard or newsprint visible to the group.

(30 Minutes)

5. When all the questions have been voiced and grouped according to similarity, the director invites response to them from anyone in the group.

As time allows, participants may also share with the large group helpful answers which they received in this session.

(10 Minutes)

6. The group concludes the session with a meditative reading and response to the hymn on charity found in 1 Cor. 13:1-13.

VIII. EIGHTH WEEK PROGRAM

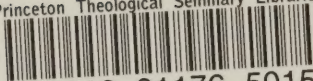
(90 Minutes)

UNANSWERED QUESTIONS

A. INTRODUCTION

—The goal of this session is to articulate and answer questions still in the minds of the participants with regard to youth and religious beliefs.

—Participants should have reread the one or two articles which are of most interest to them. They should also have prepared one or two questions which remain unanswered for them with regard to youth and religious belief.



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Youth:

WE CAN'T TURN BACK THE CLOCK

James J. DiGiacomo

TO TEACH CHRIST JESUS

John S. Nelson

DO THEY KNOW HOW GOOD THEY REALLY ARE?

Moral Formation of Adolescents

Richard Reichert

A SURVEY OF TEENS

John E. Forliti

CATECHESIS WITHOUT WALLS

Michael Warren

INDIVIDUALIZED LEARNING IN RELIGION

Ruth McDonell

PLANNING ACTIVITIES INTO CCD

Irene and Joseph Roach

PRAYER: REAL OR PHONEY?

Julie Weckwerth

A LITURGY CELEBRATING PEACE AND JUSTICE

Ann Macksoud

CCD BECOMES A RETREAT

Richard Costello

ADULT EDUCATION PROGRAM

John and Catherine Nelson



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